

OUR
NATUPSKI
NEIGHBORS



BY EDITH
MINITER

2¹⁰

This named for some reason had no sale commensurate
with its merit. It best illustrates the progress of
Americanization. When I say that I regard our
Natuspeki "Neighbors" by Edith Minster, New England
journalist, as superior even to "my Antonia" you
will see how much I admire it. — W. L. P. — Oct 1922.

Victoria Longley
March 1924-

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OUR NATUPSKI NEIGHBORS



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BY
EDITH MINITER



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To

J. E. T. D.

Who Made These Stories Possible

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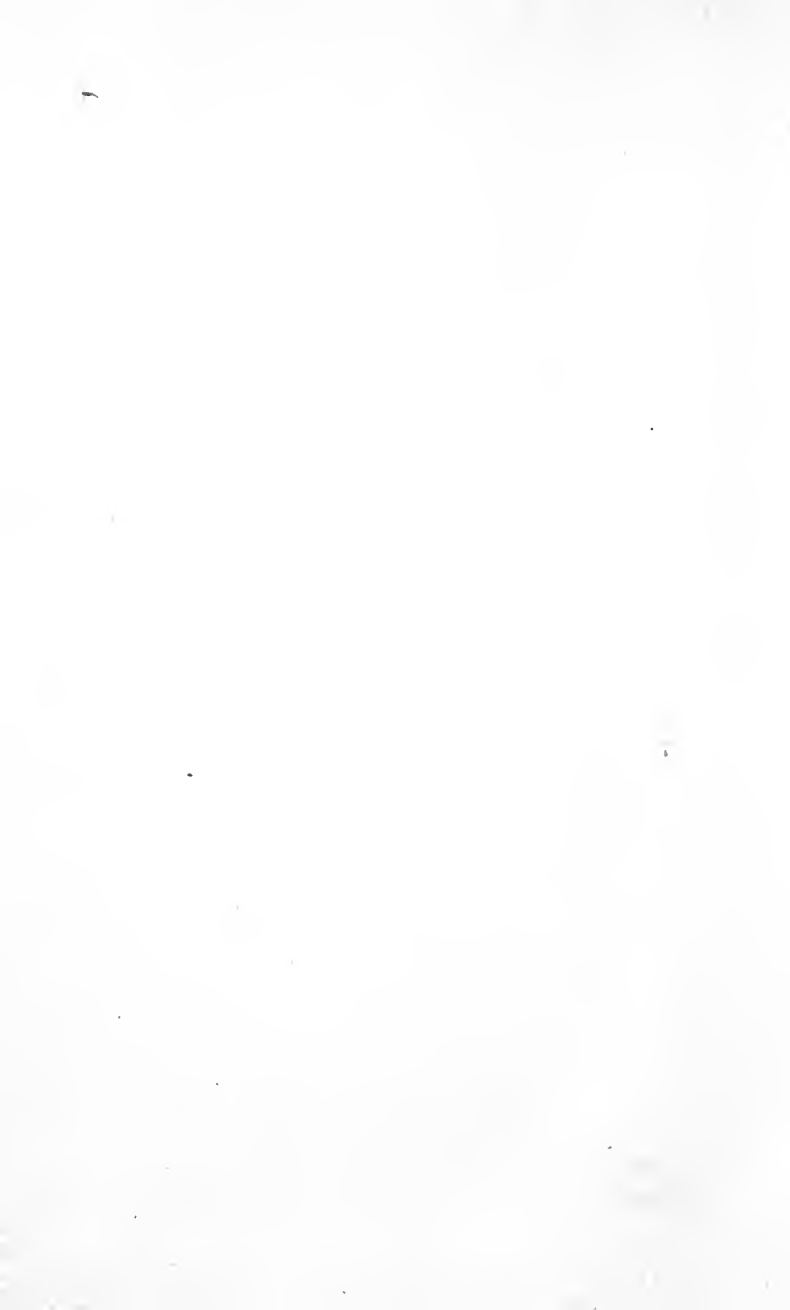
SPARROWS, GYPSY MOTHS AND SUCH

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**SPARROWS, GYPSY MOTHS
AND SUCH**



I

MRS. NATUPSKI

MRS. NATUPSKI looked skyward from a narrow street in a great European seaport. She counted the windows. Three—perhaps four. She walked up three flights of stairs to reach her room, but it was difficult to understand if that made the number of windows, counting from the pavement, three or four. Where she had come from there had been no tall buildings, like this one near the docks. She must not make a mistake. If four there would have to be a longer rope. Still, it was foolish to waste money on one too long. Better pay the landlord and be done with it.

Wrapping her skirt about the ring of bread which hung over her arm, she pulled herself up the three flights. The room she entered was a mere crevice among many which the house held for the accommodation of those seeking temporary shelter before sailing. A bed was in it, a chair and a child. On the wall a black and red poster announced sailings of the Hamburg-American line. Mrs. Natupski could not read this, but the dates were not only impressed on her mind—those already passed had been marked in pencil. "Kronprincessin Caecilie" was two weeks gone. It was the boat with which her train had connected—the last of the trains which had brought her from Poland.

She had been all impatience to leave Poland. Hardly

could she attend to the vociferous farewells of relatives, who gathered in numbers the day she left her own town. They knew well enough she did not hear, but they had forgiven—she had ears only for the call across the sea. The strained look of the listener never left her eyes even when she automatically answered the questions of wonder-crazed Stanisłarni, the four-year-old now balanced upon his stomach and the window-sill, trying to catch a view of life in the alley from which his mother had just come.

She snatched his legs in a quick frenzy which seemed more anger than fear, gave him a couple of blows that would have felled an adult carefully reared; then folding him in her arms sat and choked him with mother love. It was a hot afternoon. The still air held sounds as in a solution—the squalling of lots of babies, gruff voices of men answering the shrill complaints of women, in many dialects; street cries from a neighboring square.

“Hell——” cried Mrs. Natupski, darting her beady eyes upon the child, who seemed drowsing.

He straightened his little back, and lisped the word after her. “’L!” His mother shook him.

“*Mowie ze nie!* Hell——”

His second attempt was better. She went on, “O!” His baby mouth pursed into a round, and Mrs. Natupski swooped toward him as if to give reward in the form of a kiss, then as suddenly desisted, and broke into Polish speech. The child nodded, and made the best he could of the greeting he was being taught.

“Hell-o, pa-pa!” It sounded like the work of a badly worn phonograph record. Mrs. Natupski thought it was pretty good. She hushed him when a step came outside

the door, however, but it was not the landlord. She might save the seven marks yet.

The child said he was hungry and she gave him some of the bread. She would eat none until later. That way supper made breakfast.

They would be surprised, those relations in Poland, if they could know she had not gone in the first boat. Nor yet in the second. Perhaps she would not go in the "Augusta Victoria," which sailed next. She crossed herself, then tumbled Stanislarni into bed without any preliminary undressing, and proceeded to count her money. It was tied into strange parts of her clothing, and she kept each lot separate, in a little pile on the chair. This on the right Kani had sent at Christmas. The sum was not large. It came in the letter where he had said Lowell in America was a lonely place and he wanted to see his little Stanislarni. The other sum, much larger, had come from the dealer who sold for her all she had except the clothing she and Stanislarni were wearing, and the things in the canvas extension case under the bed.

She had feared it might be necessary to wait in this city; the farewell gift of Uncle Vladimir to Stanislarni was to pay for that. As it had paid, those coins were now missing. She had not thought it would be so long a wait—a week and then more weeks. How Wardi had cried when she learned Mrs. Natupski was not going on the "Kronprincessin Caecilie." Wardi was a girl she had made friends with on the train, who bought sweet things for Stanislarni. Wardi had an incredible sum sewed into the top of her stocking leg, and longed to spend it, because, as she explained, her man had done well in America, and would be at that place called Ellis Island

with much more. Some did pick up coins in the American streets, it seemed, though poor Kani was not one.

Stanislarni was lying on his back, his mouth wide open in a manner that would raise suspicion of adenoids once he was adopted into his future country. Mrs. Natupski thought she too would go to bed, and rose from the floor, where she had been squatting worshipping the money in the chair. Straightening up, a pang shot through her. She could barely repress a scream. Then it passed, and she realized the time had come to continue her journey. Only she had to work carefully, and save the seven marks—ticket agents would not sell a pfennig short! She took a coil of rope from under her bolster and fastened it beneath Stanislarni's armpits, shamelessly padding the child with sheets and blankets. The extension case she fastened some distance from the end of the rope, with a double loop. And then, having frightened the little one into probable silence by an account of the fearful vengeance awaiting him should he make the slightest noise, she pushed him from the window, as a mother bird shoves her young from the nest.

Was the rope long enough? The time came when there was some slack. Suppose he had stopped upon a lower window ledge, should fall to the street and be killed? Another pang! She tied the rope to the foot of the bed, and went out, locking the door. The landlord, whom she met in the lower hall, kept on smoking his porcelain pipe serenely. He did not mind her coming and going, since she always left her child in the room. When she took the boy would be time to ask if that remittance had arrived. At the supper table he enjoyed his pumper-

nickel and beer, and did not know he had lost seven marks.

Stanislarni and the extension case were within reach, in the alley. Five minutes later Mrs. Natupski was laying down the money for a third-class passage to New York. The agent saw she was pale, and, in her own tongue, bade her cheer up, it would soon be over. He spoke as of an ordeal, but to Mrs. Natupski all woe was passed. She had planned wisely, and Stanislarni's little brother would be born in the hospital of the big ship, where were comforts of which Mrs. Natupski had heard, but which she yet dimly comprehended: good food—well, she could understand that—midwives in starched clothes—men doctors—white beds; and no need to move for a fortnight. She had got up and cooked Kani's supper two hours after Stanislarni's birth. And nothing to pay—nothing at all! It was certainly worth the waiting.

They etherized her, for no luxuries are denied those who buy a \$15 passage to the land of the free. Her last thought was of Kani. He would be no longer lonesome in that Lowell of America. Nor poor, even if he had missed finding money as did Wardi's man. The hundred dollars with which one bribed the great country was, she knew, returned. The sum was just as you gave it, and Kani should have it all; except, of course, what was needed to take one to that—Lowell—in—America——

In the meantime, Kani had left Lowell and had gone first to Mifflin Grove, then to West Holly, a small town fifteen miles distant. He took Olka with him. He had married her at New Year, perhaps because the weather was cold, probably in order to have a woman when he

should secure that farm which was the goal of his ambition. Kani had not forgotten Marinki in Poland. He had felt the truth when he wrote about wanting to see his little Stanislarni. At Christmas time he even made inquiries as to the cost of bringing over a woman and two children. He knew there would be two by the following summer.

Yes, he would have liked to see Marinki and Stanislarni—especially Stanislarni. But to spend all that money! It would mean putting off buying the farm for a whole year. It would be foolish. So he took Olka for wife, and with Olka her savings. Combined with his own, which might otherwise have been squandered in steamship tickets, a first payment was made on the Judson Buckland place, in West Holly.

Mrs. Buckland had been ten years trying to sell her rickety house and one hundred barren acres. Kani thought he was shrewd to buy from a woman, who would, of course, be easy to cheat. He could scarcely believe in his own fortune when the place became his. And Mrs. Buckland pinched herself as she drove from the lawyer's with two hundred dollars cash and a mortgage note. Those Polanders were sure great workers, she reflected.

She would get her interest quarterly, even if she occasionally took a crop for it.

One October evening, three months after Mrs. Natupski so skilfully took ship from Europe, Kani Natupski and his Olka sat gloating on the steps of their new home, which was a very old house, weather-beaten by half a century of New England winters, warped by an equal number of draughty summers. The windows rat-

tled, the doors sagged, the chimney needed topping off, there were huge wasps' nests under the front gable, squirrels had gnawed great holes in the roof, and rats ran everywhere. Kani thought it perfection.

Night was near at hand, that was why he was not working. By and by he might light the lantern and go out to the barn, where he would give the horse a beating and several quarts too much grain. This excessive generosity, in addition to corn on the ear, would ultimately founder a fine animal, but Kani was blissfully ignorant of the assured result. He must feed the cow, too; the one from which Mr. Bowes had offered to buy future calves. Mr. Bowes was in the veal-producing line, and a great aid to other farmers who supplied creamery milk. Natupski would none of him.

"No calf," he had replied with great decision to the querist on the other side of the barb wire. "My cow have no calf. Can't stop have calf. Me need milk. All time."

Why did Mr. Bowes laugh?

Kani could hear the cow lowing expectantly while he took the ragged sweater from Olka's shoulders and wrapped it about his own. Cousin Nick Kovinski, who sat with them, frowned, but Kani did not mean a cruelty. He was dispassionately considering the greatest good. The air had a tang. It would be very bad if he, the man and the worker, should take a chill and be sick. Cousin Nicholas was young, besides his was the disadvantage of American birth. When he should marry Olka's sister and buy a farm he would doubtless be glad to assume the good Polish way of woman ruling. He had spoken already of a liking for the place next door, whence came

those whiffs of vinegar and spices that stood for Nancy Slocumb's piccalil.

The Natupskis had a good smell of their own, too. They were burning brush. Kani grinned when he looked at the blazing mass, from which a slender gray smoke went heavenward, after curling about the topmost twigs, as if loath to leave. He was thinking of the fine afternoon's work he had done, grubbing up that topmost bush. It grew in a corner of the homelot, of a tallness to his shoulder when he stood on the wall, and it had little red leaves all over it. Just meant to be pretty, of course, it would have to go. He had denuded the house of the woodbine and the wistaria which softened its ugly angles, and made short work of the syringas and lilacs by the door.

He knew what trouble they caused, in the spring; he had seen it on his first trip of inspection, made the previous May. Folks came along and broke off branches and said, "Pretty, pretty." He didn't want them to say "Pretty, pretty," in front of his house. He wanted them to say, "Natupski, he rich. Natupski, big farm, plenty children."

Here was the farm, the children were just beginning. He cast a glance of something remotely related to affection at little 'Statia, two weeks old, who lay on Olka's knee. Then he began to tell about grubbing up the red-leaved bush.

Oh, how he had worked, with crowbar and spade and his bare hands. Proudly he exhibited many wounds. Mr. Slocumb and his man had tried to keep him from working, too. They had talked very fast and loud, using many English words which he did not know. Only he

did know they begged him not to destroy the bush. For some reason they did not want to see it go. By and by Mr. Slocumb himself had yelled very loud and jumped right over the barb wire, and grabbed the spade. But he, Natupski, got the better of the old fellow. With a kick he did it. And displayed two rows of handsome white teeth as he grinned thereat. Oh, if he kept on as he began, and had many children to help him, he would show those people a fine farm and a rich farmer.

He had no suspicion it was the Judson Buckland crack swamp blueberry bush he had destroyed—the one which yielded bushels of prime salable berries every summer. Blueberries he had not known in Poland. He was in America to get rich, that seemed necessary, but he had no idea of accepting American advice.

The holocaust of values continued, and Kani, rising, tucked his shirt into the waistband of his trousers, for one had to make that much concession to American prejudice when crossing the road, and started toward the barn. He turned and reminded Olka that she had yet to pursue and shut up the chickens. Half a hundred of them, practically nude of feathers, were squawking always about the premises, in the house as likely as not, and helping themselves from the barrels of stale bread which served as chief article of food alike for family and poultry. Supplemented by astringent cider it kept the breath of life in Kani, and had enabled Olka to nourish 'Statia, but it would not put plumage on the chickens. Kani was untroubled by the fact, evident to all the neighborhood not named Natupski, that the little things would turn up their toes and peep their last peep at the first real sharp weather.

The woman gained her feet and began to call "Cheek, cheek," then stopped to gaze at another woman who was standing in front of the house. She was not very young-looking, this other woman, but perhaps this was because her hair was unkempt, and her eyes sunken in a sallow face. She wore a gay and filthy costume which Olka, at the door, knew was made in Poland. Olka herself had American clothes—a 39-cent kimono above a crinkled seersucker petticoat; and she pulled her hair over a wire roll with rhinestone-set side combs. She observed with scorn the full skirt of chocolate woolen, the little fringed shawl embroidered in a floral design perhaps Polish—certainly America had no such green roses and purple foliage—the clumsy jewelry and silk head scarf. The stranger carried on one hip a solemn-eyed infant, and on the other hip balanced a gray extension case, extended to its full extent. By her side walked a boy. His shoes were sheathed in copper, his flapping trousers were of cotton stuff, turned dirt color, and above them was a tattered apron. He too bore a burden, a small bundle, wrapped in black oilcloth.

The newcomer leaned against the fence, resting the child and the extension case alternately, as if unable to decide which gave greater relief.

Kani had paused in the road and was still fumbling at his shirt. A mere lad he seemed, for he was slight of figure, blonde, and with the ingenuous, direct gaze of one whose aims in life were simple.

The foreign-looking woman pushed the older child with her foot, exhibiting a Congress gaiter having its elastic gores worn threadbare. Thus reminded, the lad repeated a lesson he had been weary months learning.

"Hell-o, pa-pa!" he cried, mechanically. And as the man only continued to stare, he repeated, "Hell-o, pa-pa!"

Kani struck his hands to his forehead.

"God! God!" he shouted.

It was not bewilderment at the presence of the two women he had married, though Mr. and Mrs. Slocumb would have thought so. It was sheer amazement at the fact that little Stanislarni should be capable of coming to America and addressing him in the English tongue.

Still, he was in a fix, and after a few moments realized the fact. Marinki, by the road, and Olka, at the door—he must now lose one or the other. He did not feel in any way to blame for the way things had turned out; only Marinki was to blame. He could not send her money to come to America because he was using his money to buy the farm. With a farm there must be a woman, and if your Polish wife stops in Poland you take one near at hand. But those two beautiful children, and Stanislarni a big boy! Olka had only had a girl. Kani, standing in the road, third in the immortal triangle, mentally put the child to work that very instant.

"Up, Stanislarni, it is almost morning. Quick, to the barn, you carrying one pail and I three; see, you save me a trip back that way. Now, Stanislarni, up through the little hole in the platform; you are small and can go there, so I need not climb the ladder. Throw down hay, much hay, oh, much more than that. Now run with me to the bread bin, take this and throw to the chickens—ah, you like that. You laugh to see them all come running. I must milk now, and you can carry in chips for the fire; and by and by you shall go to the

field with me, and after I have stuck the fork into the hill of potatoes you shall creep up and put them into the basket. I will teach you to follow the cows, too, and wave a stick, you can run after them, and be just as much use as that big dog the folks named Perkins are so proud of. I saw the woman break a loaf in two and give both parts to him one day. Just think, a whole loaf of bread, and a dog, only good for chasing cows and barking when folks pass. So come on, Stanislarni; and when your legs shake because you are tired, I will not beat you very hard, for you are my first-born, and I love you much."

Olka came to the fence and looked scornfully at the old greenhorn. Did she want work? Was she some relation to Kani, that he never told her about? The boy tentatively ran out his tongue at Olka. The latter thought his mother encouraged him by another furtive kick.

As the most cutting thing she could say she remarked to Kani, in their own tongue, "One would think that old woman looked on you as her husband."

Kani, moistening his lips with his tongue a couple of times, replied simply, "She does."

Olka burst into a torrent of Polish vituperation, skillfully embroidered with English filth.

Mrs. Natupski lifted her head and listened. Then she proudly reassumed her two hip burdens, called Stanislarni sharply, and turned on her way. Kani's jaw dropped. He ran after her.

"Come back! You come back!" he yelled. Then he pursued her, shouting explanations. "You too far! Me all alone. Me here all alone. Come back. Stanislarni come back."

He tried to speak English. Perhaps he thought the child did not understand Polish. When he caught up to them he ran alongside and continually repeated his fragments of pleading. The woman trudged right on, but the child, already weary, began to lag and whimper; let go his hold on his mother's skirts and half turned.

"*Patrz!*" he cried, pointing at the house.

As in a pillar of fire Olka stood by the burning bush. Whether she had tried to follow, and had carelessly pulled her flimsy kimono through the blaze, or if she had not cared for life, knowing herself deceived, Kani Natupski was never to be told. Cousin Nicholas saved her from the result of whatever accident or purpose there was. Whipping off his coat, a roomy old ulster inside which he had been shivering in the sharp air, he rolled her on the ground, from which she was then helped up unhurt.

The burning bush, perhaps exasperated at loss of its prey, blazed with extra fury; by its light Olka and Nicholas exchanged a few rapid words and then separated, he going barnward, she entering the house. Immediately, in the glare, Nicholas could be seen leading out the noble black horse for which Kani was still indebted two notes of three and six months each at six and a half and five per cent. Attached thereto was the shining wagon for which he had forwarded the proceeds of the owen to South Bend, Ind. The harness had already been put in place. Kani was settling for the harness on the basis of \$2.50 a month.

At her child's exclamation Marinki had whirled about, she even joined Kani in panting up the hill down which she had marched so proudly. Seeing them coming,

Cousin Nicholas gave a sharp call, whereat Olka stumbled out of the house. With one hand she held firmly on her head a mass of lace curtains and stringy plumes, the thing that had been her wedding hat. With the other hand she fumbled at the fastenings of her \$6.98 bargain wedding gown. She walked unsteadily because she had thrust her toes into French-heeled slippers. A pair of striped stockings—green—and a near-silk petticoat, corn color, hung on her arm. Nicholas lost no time boosting her (and his concertina) into the wagon. Following over the tailboard he grabbed the reins and drove off in too much of a hurry to sit down. Both yelling derision, and Olka helping what she could by plying the whip, they vanished from the vision of Mrs. Natupski.

As for Kani, he was employed running hither and yon, crying excitedly, "'Statia, my little 'Statia, where she gone, where she gone?'"

Marinki believed him bewailing that other woman. She could not keep a dignified scorn from her gesture, as she pointed over the brow of the hill, where wheel tracks would be seen come morning. But Kani had suddenly begun to laugh. "Here she's, here she's!" he bellowed, finding the baby sleeping on the step. Olka had chosen what she thought the better part. Lacking time to assemble both her infant and her fine clothes, she went with the clothes. They should help her to a new husband. The baby would not do that, unless she took another Polander of the old fashion. Feeling the breath of Cousin Nick on her neck she didn't believe she would so choose.

Kani had but one idea in recovering his offspring, to shoot it into the arms of Marinki. They closed mechani-

cally about the little gift. At the same time the almost three months older Wajeiceh, whose native sod was a steerage cabin, slid off her hip. He landed on the ground with a thump and set up an astounded yell. His babyhood had been brought to an abrupt end, but he did not know that was why he cried.

Mrs. Natupski picked him up, with half an arm, and followed her husband and Stanislarni into the house. It had been a long journey from Poland, not to speak of the weary search for Kani which began with that Lowell in America, and had only just ended in West Holly. So many were the adventures that this great one at the last loomed no larger than the wonders of the tiled bath on ship, or constant marmalade for breakfast.

Dropping wearily into the broken rocking-chair which Mrs. Judson Buckland had not thought worth moving, and baring her bosoms to the two infants, "*Siedziec w domu*" ("I am come home"), said Mrs. Natupski.

II

IN CIVILIZATION'S SERVICE

ALL was soon as peaceful in the Natupski mansion as could be any house that contained two infants under twelve weeks of age. Mrs. Natupski complacently performed the duties of a mother. Kani drudged as a beast of burden but for occasional detours into the stable, where he hugged Stanislarni and then beat him for not properly cleaning the cow-pen. A fork had been put into the boy's hand, as the proper implement for a four-year-old.

Not so did peace reign in any other part of West Holly. The disturbance began with Nancy Slocumb at the breakfast table with her husband.

"You know the Polanders, Abner," she said, while dishing out fried pork and cream gravy.

He nodded, grinned, and put his hand sympathetically on a lump which Kani Natupski's shoe had raised during the altercation over the blueberry bush.

"You recollect the wife he had yesterday?"

"Guess I can manage to keep a good-looking woman in my mind so long."

"Don't be coarse, Abner! Well, there's a wife there today, but she's the spitting image of somebody else."

"Shucks!" said Abner, allowing two extra spoonfuls of sugar to cover the four already in his cup, and hoping Nance would put this prodigality down as due to ex-

citement. "How d'ye know so much? Maybe it's a walkess come to help out. The baby was born a fortnight since."

"Don't tell me. If they'd been going to have hired help they'd have got one first thing. Besides, there's another mystery. The baby's two-three months old."

Abner considered that impossible.

"Fact," continued Nancy, "for I slipped up on the stoop when nobody was round. It lay in the rocker, I poked my finger into its mouth, and it was cutting a tooth!"

"A feller in English history or Shakespeare was born with 'em," Abner volunteered, but Nancy cared nothing for the past, being wholly concerned with the immediate present in West Holly. Something, she declared, must be done, and at once. These foreigners came to live nigh us, and as like as not they were used to being Mormons "or worse" in their own country. And it was a man's place to investigate.

Whereupon Nancy walked to the telephone and called up Mrs. Perkins, Mrs. Blanchard Bowes, Mrs. Hiram Farrar, and all her other female neighbors, in order that they might convey these suspicions to their men folks in properly lurid style. In the meantime Abner went about the matter man fashion, for he looked over the fence at Kani Natupski and after speaking of the weather, politics, winter coming on and how chilly it was getting nights, to each of which the reply was an unmitigated "Yah!" he came out with, "Got company to your house?"

"Wife. Lil' boy. Baby," said Natupski. "In ship, from Poland. Me glad."

Abner sat down hard, got up quickly to see where he had split the fence rail, and dragged himself into the presence of Nancy, where he was obliged to gratify her with the intelligence that she had been almost right. At the same moment the appearance of Mrs. Natupski on the piazza with an infant draped over each arm solved another mystery.

Public opinion was soon roused against the mischievous foreign element, and while Kani and Marinki continued their labors as packmule and mother and foster mother, West Holly adorned them with various titles, not even sparing that of "murderer." The poor young woman, Olka, it was declared, might be even then weltering in her gore down cellar, or at least pining away in the garret. When the men sneered at these theories, the women retorted to effect that "Such things did happen, so now, and not only in Mrs. Southworth's novels. Look in your daily papers!"

Suspensions of violence departed when Olka took to driving about with Nicholas Kovinski in the buggy that had been Natupski's, after the once Natupski nag, but this made the moral aspect of the affair more shocking than before.

West Holly was an ordinary piece of a large town, set apart for something akin to self-government because of a huge sparsely inhabited hill which intervened between it and all the rest of Holly. To get anywhere you went a long way around the mountain. Really, this bit of a settlement should have attached itself to Lansing or Hamson, both towns being much nearer than were Holly Centre or Holly Depot, but it clung tenaciously to Holly, perhaps in order to swell with pride when-

ever any one mentioned Holly Academy, where no West Hollyite of the older generation but Blanchard Bowes ever essayed to go, and he was expelled in one term for coaxing a calf to the upper floor of the female dormitory.

West Holly considered itself a village all complete. It had a church and graveyard, but no grocery, whereby one obtains a perfect picture of the kind of a place it was. The church was one door wide and two windows deep. The minister was a non-resident, borrowed for Sunday afternoons from the Methodists of Hamson. There was a good sheriff, however, always available unless he had over-addicted himself to hard cider; and Blanchard Bowes was land surveyor, fence-viewer, hog reeve, justice of the peace, and sole owner of a painted barn with a cupola and weathervane.

Not being devoid of modern literature or a woman's club, West Holly knew other places wrestled with an "immigrant problem," but the Natupski problem was its own and its first. West Holly, not ungleefully, proceeded to wrestle.

It was decided not to speak to the Rev. Mr. Skeelee, because, in a way, as Mrs. Sabrina Perkins pointed out, he too was a foreigner, having been born in Nova Scotia. Besides, he lived in Hamson, and West Holly didn't want its scandals spread all over the county. Mrs. Perkins was strong for "haling" the wicked Polander before justice, and putting him through a regular trial. Say, at the schoolhouse some evening, when the chores were done up. She and the other women could lend a lamp apiece, and Mr. Bowes might preside. Natupski had picked up considerable English, however he did it so quick, and she guessed between 'em all they could under-

stand what he might have to say for himself. Not that there was anything in his defense to be said. It was perfectly evident that he had deceived that poor young creature, Olka, and now deprived her even of her child. A mother's heart always cleaved—clave—clove—however you put it—to her child. Look at the divorce cases when all the quarrel was over how to divide the children. Sometimes the other party kidnapped 'em, too. It meant something, the way she and the Kovinski fellow rode up and down the highway.

Six West Holly men met at the watering trough one afternoon, and while waiting for precedence, the matter of Mr. Natupski and the two Natupski women came up.

"My women folks," grunted Blanchard Bowes, "declare he ought to be convicted and tried. Yes, that's the correct order, according to their way of putting it."

"Mrs. Perkins," observed Sabrina's husband, "considers them a disgrace to the neighborhood. Says we'll be a byword to the rest of the town unless we take some sort of action."

Three nods from as many heads indicated the prevalence of Mrs. Perkins' opinions. Abner Slocumb drove up last.

"How's your wife feel?" asked Mr. Bowes. "You're the nighest to the seat of war and should have the strongest opinions."

"My wife's way of thinking," said Abner, "is just like every other woman's. She wouldn't want to be caught out of style, whether 'twas matter of a bunnet or state o' mind."

"Great pity," remarked Bowes, "that Mrs. Judson Buckland sold out. If she hadn't been in such a hurry

to turn her land into cash and move to the depot, she'd likely have had a real good offer from some party that'd been an addition to the neighborhood. But women are always carried away with novelty."

Each man hastened to agree to this, which, as a general proposition, might be true, though it hardly applied to Mrs. Buckland, whose farm had been in the market ten years, without a taker, before the arrival of Kani Natupski.

Mr. Perkins objected chiefly to the inevitable lowering of what he referred to as "West Holly standards."

"Say you have company from the city," he explained, "and you hitch up and take 'em round to show 'em West Holly is getting to amount to something these days. You point out the Blanchard Bowes peach orchard, and tell how many men and dogs patrol night times when the peaches is most ripe, and their eyes begin to stick out. Then you go on to Abner Slocumb's and they take in the bay windows and iron stag in the front yard and the squirting fountain with the boy and girl under an umbrella, and they have to allow ain't anything tastier or more fancy in the city itself. So far so good, but then it's necessary to drive past Natupski's, and after that you've got to cave in. Every bit of green grubbed up, house spilling filth, and the whole family certain sure to be walking round half dressed. No use to take 'em further. They won't believe we know how to live like folks when we tolerate such a human hog-pen on our main-traveled road."

"And what it will be when those children get school age I shudder to think of," observed Hiram Farrar, who boarded the teacher and always had the inside history of

how the educational system, with or without vertical penmanship, was working on the baker's dozen of West Holly pupils.

"Be we men or mice?" piped up the sixth man in so shrill a voice that every person and some horses jumped. Solomon Russell sat well hidden under the hood of his low-topped buggy. He and his little chunk were never aggressive. The horse was only beginning to sip what water remained after the voracious tall animals had been satisfied. All six men were coming from the cider mill. Five long wagons were laden with barrels. Solomon had only a modest cask, coyly hidden under a plush lap robe.

Solomon had never married; he lived alone, in a house he had inherited, and spent most of his time driving around pleading poverty. As he dressed neatly and plead in a low, refined voice, he was generally successful in obtaining concessions. The hire of a yoke of oxen and a plow, \$5 a day to every one else, was only \$3.75 to Solomon, with a stout boy thrown in to hold the plow. Naturally Solomon Russell would not approve of Kani Natupski, whose idea of farming was one of personal hard labor. So, "Be we men or mice?" piped up the old bachelor.

"What's your meaning?" asked Blanchard Bowes.

"Be we going to stand this invasion or be we going to drive 'em out, first thing, before any more gets in? America for the Americans, is my cry. I got it from father. He was a Know-Nothing and left a lot of reading about that party which is just as good now as then. There, I've said my say. If I was a next-door neighbor, like Slocumb, or had land adjoining, as you, Bowes, it

wouldn't be long before there was a vacant house where Natupski's is. What's law and order for? Be we men or mice?"

Feeling he had made a neat speech, Solomon cramped his wheels, turned in an incredibly small mud puddle, and sent the little chunk pattering away while the impression was good.

The other men likewise departed, after registering a vague opinion that something must be done to cut this festering canker out of the otherwise pure body politic of West Holly.

Abner Slocumb, almost at home, met Mrs. Judson Buckland, whose old calico horse was droning down the road at its own gait, while the driver exulted over a wad of money which she was spreading over her capacious lap, irrespective of danger from what highway robbers might infest West Holly.

Mrs. Buckland was the free-and-easy sort. "Hullo, there," she bawled, "look at all the nasty greenbacks Natupski's paid me—quarter's interest, right on the nail. Took 'em out of his boot—hope they'll hold together till I can get 'em to the bank. I started to show 'em to your wife, and make her green with envy, but she just squealed 'germs' and bolted the door."

"All dollar bills?" asked Abner.

"Sure. The poor runt can't pick up much but chicken feed this time of year. If I'd sold to an American he'd have held me off till next season's crops, and I'd been just the soft-hearted fool to let him."

Abner, only too well aware that he was generally ready to beg for time when the interest was due on his mortgage, smiled in a sickly manner and—as Solomon Russell

half an hour earlier—mentally hoped Natupski wasn't setting what was to become a West Holly fashion.

Mrs. Buckland went on gloating. "Overpaid me, too, into three dollars, on account of the bills sticking together, as I've just found out. I think he saw it just as I drove down the road, for he came through the house roaring something in his jargon which I thought best not to hear. Then, judging from the sounds, he went in and beat his wife. Say, ain't she aged rapidly? My eyesight ain't very good, and these foreign faces never make much impression on me, but honest to goodness she didn't seem to me the same woman I got a glimpse of last July. And where do they get such a snarl of young ones?"

Abner escaped without explaining things to the volatile Mrs. Buckland. She was too good a gossip to be trusted with West Holly's closet skeleton.

When he was safely beyond hailing distance he turned and watched Mrs. Buckland and her outfit disappear. The horse being piebald, her buggy painted yellow with red running-gear, and her attire a pink and green-striped shirtwaist above a blue plaid skirt, there was a total impression as of a crazy quilt borne away by a sluggish wind.

"Always a darn nice neighbor," mused Abner, "for borrowing saleratus and such. And I don't think it's improved her one mite having become a creditor. Took three dollars over and above her due!"

Abner pulled a neat pocketbook from his vest and inspected the contents. There were exactly three one-dollar bills. And what different bills from those Mrs. Buckland bore away from Natupski's! Nancy Slocumb

washed and dried every piece of paper money that came into her house—the specie had to stand a good scouring with whiting and later polishing under chamois skin. Abner's three bills looked so new that he might have just made them himself.

After he had put the horse up he meandered to the line fence and took careful note of what Natupski had been doing all day. Clearing a field of stones. It was marvelously cleared, too; and not a corner left for harboring seed-scattering weeds. Abner Slocumb wasn't that sort of a farmer, but he could appreciate it.

Natupski was out by the road, waving a hand, bruised and bloody from stone picking, at the butcher's cart. He meant to buy no meat this evening—not even his usual meager purchase of half a pound of Hamburg steak. Mrs. Natupski, drooping over the two infants who were dragging her down, looked a hollow-eyed disappointment, but said nothing.

Abner Slocumb could not avoid connecting the passing of the butcher and Mrs. Buckland's unmerited gain.

“Plaguy old woman, eat up with avarice,” muttered Abner, and looked again at his clean dollar bills. He had been intending to break one of them at the butcher's cart, but he too waved the white top along. After all, he and Nance didn't need lamb chops at twenty-eight cents the pound. They could make out perfectly well with bacon, ham, dried beef, salted mackerel, codfish in cream, baked beans, and a couple those roosters that strutted round eating their heads off.

When he went into the house if there wasn't his creditor come about the interest on the Slocumb place. Only no one would have suspected it.

This creditor spoke about the new branch railroad and the cat and whether the governor had been justified in refusing to sign a bill for a feeble-minded home in the county, so all the idiots needn't be sent away off to Boston, where their folks could hardly have the satisfaction of seeing them twice a year. Nothing was said about anything so vulgar as money. After an hour of this the creditor rose to go, and while drawing on a pair of driving gloves commiserated with the Slocumbs on their new neighbors.

"You must feel it," were the words, "this invasion. Such old settlers as your family—you hold it on a grant from the Indians, don't you?"

"My forbears," laughed Abner, "are generally supposed to have got the better of the red man one time the latter was wagged out with fire water. I've never felt very consequentious over the transaction."

"Oh, it was quite justifiable—quite. You see, the red men never developed or improved the country. They had to go to the wall in the interest of civilization. Now, these Natupskis——"

"I haven't any cash on hand just now," cried Abner, as if glad to talk of anything not Natupski. And so he was, for memory of that stoneless field contrasted with his own, feeding in which was possible only to the proverbial sharpened sheep's nose. If his forbears performed a noble deed in supplanting the savages, what would be the historic opinion of a slack New Englander who acted as obstructionist to an industrious Polander? So, "I haven't any cash on hand," he blurted out, adding, "I calculate to sell the apples next week, or maybe the

week after. I'd have tried to catch up if I'd known you was coming."

And, "Oh, that's perfectly satisfactory," returned the creditor. "I just thought I'd drop in while I was up this way. You can mail me a check when it's convenient."

Abner Slocumb glowed with manly pride at the manner in which the affair was conducted, and the creditor seemed quite contented, too. Not so did Mrs. Judson Buckland treat Kani Natupski. Oh, not so! Abner felt that he ought to thank the Powers that Be that fate hadn't made him a foreigner with a mortgaged farm in West Holly. Then he wondered what the Powers that Be had to do with it.

In the end he went out in the yard and looked at his three dollar bills. He felt a queer, a thoroughly non-New England impulse. He would like to walk up to Natupski and say, "Here's three dollars for you. Do what you gol' ram please with it." Only he was afraid the Polander wouldn't take the money. He had an idea he was proud—under all his dirt and vermin and ignorance, proud! There was only one way to get round such pride. Tell a lie. Slocumb told it like a gentleman.

He handed the three dollars to Natupski, with a story of having been entrusted with the money by Mrs. Buckland when she found she had been overpaid. He wondered if he had saved Mrs. Natupski from a beating by his deception. And then again, was it not a bruise she was nursing on her cheek? Had he saved her from a beating? And, after all, why should he save her from a beating?

He felt he had somehow got the better of Mrs. Buckland. That alone was worth three dollars.

"Pretty small potatoes, I call it, picking on a foreigner because he is one. What sort of a figure 'd we cut in his country, I'd like to know? Green as grass to ways and lingo."

Right after this came a call to the schoolhouse that evening. Blanchard Bowes was driving about, asking the men of West Holly to meet and discuss the Natupski scandal.

Slocumb considered a while, rolling a pebble this way and that under his boot. Finally he said, slowly, "Wal—yes—I guess I'll be on hand."

"Do we want the women folks?" asked Bowes.

Slocumb came to a sudden decision. "We do not," he said.

"On account the scandalous doings?"

"On account the scandalous doings. The tow row is liable to be something awful."

"I suppose so," said Bowes, and went to drum up recruits, licking his lips.

The schoolhouse was warm as toast and bright with six-lantern power when the men assembled. They felt they were part of history, and bore themselves with dignity, not to say as on stilts. But over on the Judson Buckland place Mr. and Mrs. Natupski little dreamed what this evening was in their life story. They thought it the first real frosty night of the year, when both babies had the colic because economy had dictated no fire in the bleak house; and Stanislarni nearly gave up the ghost from unwonted indulgence in green chestnuts. The cow was sick, too, and a veterinary came to look at her and

shake his head, which cost two of Abner Slocumb's three dollars. Mr. Natupski dragged his leather belt a notch or two closer as the supperless night wore on, and Mrs. Natupski polished her teeth with a piece of hard bread on which the chickens had whetted their beaks without making any impression. In fact, it was, for them, a very ordinary evening, because if the vet. wasn't always called, something was generally dying in the hen-house or barn.

Farming in Massachusetts was different from farming in Poland—besides, Kani Natupski had not been a farmer in Poland. In Poland he had envied the farmers, that was why he had so yearned for a bit of land.

He would accept no advice from Americans. His own people, in this country many years, told him to accept no American advice. The Americans did not know how to live, they spent money as fast as they earned it, they seemed to think one earned only to spend.

Looking at his wife Marinki, Kani felt a sudden pleasure in that she had followed him from Poland. He did not send for her because it seemed foolish to bring a wife from Poland when one had a wife at hand here, but Olka had been something of a disappointment. She had wasted five minutes every morning combing her hair, and had asked money to buy clothes when less than a year married. Marinki would be a help. She could not buy clothes, for she knew no American words with which to ask for them in shops.

While he went about, thinking all this, hauling poultry from the frosty trees in which they persisted in roosting, and flinging them, a squawking mass, into the dusty shed; and between whiles helping his wife to cuddle the

sick children in warmed rags, his fate was being settled in the seat of learning for West Holly.

The arraignment was the same as that at the watering trough. West Holly resented the invasion of Natupski. It was ready to drive him out, by fair means or foul.

Fair means—describing to the proper authorities that immoral performance, bringing a wife home who was no wife at all.

Foul means—cutting his wire fences.

The first would probably put Mr. Natupski in jail. Mrs. Natupski would then be unable to keep the farm, Mrs. Judson Buckland would foreclose, and the immigrant peril be forever over in West Holly.

("Unless she sells to the Jewish Ag. Soc.," Solomon Russell murmured, but no one paid any attention to the poor old bach.)

The men had disposed themselves according to character. Blanchard Bowes was in the teacher's seat on the platform. Blanchard Bowes was the sort of man who naturally takes chairs and gravitates to platforms. Solomon Russell was on the dunce stool. That, too, was natural. Solomon had been there most of his schooldays. Josiah Perkins used a desk for a seat. Josiah and his wife were always out for novelty. Abner Slocumb was in the front seat, the one so front it had no desk in front of it. He was endeavoring to construct a spit ball and doing pretty well considering how many years it was since he had made them every day.

Abner was thinking what a lot of old hounds we West Holly men were, and what a poor sort of an anise bag we were pursuing (no, he wouldn't dignify Natupski by

calling him a fox). Blanchard Bowes, up there, had exactly the sagacious long face of a certain Dowsabel that bayed the mountain each autumn; Perkins wore the ferret look of a younger animal; and Sol Russell betokened a worthy desire to run with both hound and hare, and be in at the death, whoever was killed. Abner fell to wondering if there was any council fire at which the hopes of his ancestors were settled, some time in the seventeenth century.

Suddenly he patted Sol Russell in the forehead with his new construction, and stalking to the blackboard wrote:

Pride
Covetousness

Wrath
Gluttony
Envy
Sloth

And, in another column:

Prudence
Justice
Temperance
Fortitude

"Anybody know what I'm driving at?" he asked, and Solomon Russell nodded.

"Oh, you think you know, eh, Sol? Well, Sol, walk to the board and write the title best way you know how."

Solomon selected a crayon that pleased him and produced in fine and fancy lettering:

“Seven Deadly Sins.”

“Good. You shall have a Reward of Merit card, Sol, to take home, if I can find where teacher keeps ’em. Seven Deadly Sins. I left the third blank, so’s not to risk any shadow of a bad word disturbing the morals of school tomorrow, but it starts with I and ends with t and has four letters, and you can guess what ’tis. Now let’s take ’em in order, since I think our Natupski neighbors have been accused of pretty much all of ’em, taking it by and large. Pride comes first. And indeed it is a deadly sin. I own to it myself. I’m house-proud and barn-proud and tarnal-proud of the Slocumb family. When I was younger I was too proud to work out. Folks thought I was easy as Tilly, but I wasn’t, I was proud. No Slocumb had ever been anything but his own master. Now, it don’t seem to me we can truthfully call this Natupski fellow one bit proud. As I take it he dug like a nigger in the mill to make a payment on Mrs. Buckland’s weed-bound farm, and he isn’t above hitching himself into the shafts since he’s lost his horse, for I’ve seen him. So we’ll have to cut out any warrant for pride.

“Covetousness. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s ox, nor his wife, nor anything that is thy neighbor’s. Gosh, he don’t. He hasn’t borrowed so much as a curry-comb yet, and that’s more’n most of us can say of American born and raised neighbors. Remember that winnowing mill of yourn, Bowes, that you always had to

spend two days chasing from place to place when you'd any grain to winnow? Why, Natupski has even set up a grindstone of his own, first one on the place since it was a place. He seems to think I bought my grindstone to grind my own scythes on. The Bucklands acted as if they thought it was kep' for their special benefit. As for wives—stop snickering, gents. I will only remark that he don't exactly need any of our'n at the present time, having, as it were, bit off more'n he can chew in that line.

“For the last four—he may be wrathful, but he keeps it pretty much for home use, and won't pick a quarrel if you let him alone; gluttony—folks living on bread crusts are let out on that score; he's too cock-sure of his own ways being correct to rightly know what envy is; and when it comes to sloth we, who get our eight hours sleep and doze over the newspaper all noon, haven't any call to criticise a poor cuss who, so far as my observance goes, works eighteen hours a day and does chores the rest of the time.

“Let us now pass to the other column, containing, as I presume you are aware, the four cardinal virtues. Prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude—any one proving up to that standard must be a pretty good fellow. Now isn't our neighbor prudent? He puts his money into land and home, instead of blowing it on good times, as most young chaps who emigrate away from West Holly start doing. He practises justice and pays his bills on the tick, whether he can buy a supper or not. He's temperate. I never expect to have to haul him out of the wheel-tracks into his barn to sleep it off, as I've hauled our worthy sheriff more'n once on Sundays when his wife

wasn't to home to do it herself. Fortitude! That's a big word with a lot of meaning. Still, it seems to me it's another way of spelling bravery, and he's a brave man who undertakes to support a wife and three children on Judson Buckland's worn-out land, and pay for the land while he's a-doing it."

"They that know nothing fear nothing," piped up Mr. Perkins. "I just read that out'en a copybook here. You've made out a good enough case for the foreigner, but I think you've slurred a leetle mite over that third sin, the unmentionable one. He's an immoral man by his own showing, and we can't harbor an immoral man in our community. Marrying one woman while you've got another and a couple of young ones is doing that can't be glossed over. It stinks, plain as the nose on your face."

"Well," said Abner, "some of us are church-goers, and we might get the Rev. Mr. Skeelee to give a discourse from that text about the one without sin casting the first stone. You know, gentlemen, there is a part of West Holly known as Silver Street?"

Indications of unrest were noticeable in the assembly.

"Over in what's been called Silver Street since the Tory tax collectors before the Revolution never found more'n a single sixpence thereabouts, were two families living peaceable and happy side by each. One couple had three boys, the other one girl. The father of the girl set eyes on the mother of the boys, and she didn't mind. So it was proposed to t'other husband and wife that they consent to swap partners. At first they was inclined to be ugly about it, but at length they agreed on one condition, they should be rid of family cares. It was done—

the woman and her three boys moved to the other house, and the man who had one child of a Saturday night, as it were, found himself possessed of four on Monday forenoon. Did we do anything to purify West Holly from this splotch on our reputation as a moral, law-abiding folks? We did not. We grinned and passed a few sassy remarks and let it go at that. Some said they guessed the ins and outs wasn't rightly understood, and probably all parties was fully justified; others guessed maybe they went to the county seat and got a bill, and it wasn't any of our business to go prying round to find out. The women one and all stood up for the wives for the reason that they was neat housekeepers. I believe one of 'em sozzled her kitchen floor every day, and that went a long ways in softening public opinion.

"Mr. Natupski maybe has a good excuse, only we haven't asked him to give it. Perhaps he heard a while back that his wife in the old country was dead or going to be married again. He certainly has done his full duty in one particular, and so's she. They took that little baby and kept it to home where it's no expense or trouble to the town; though I have heard of married men—fore-handed, too—leaving deluded girls and their offspring to come on the town."

"What about the deceived young wife?" put in Mr. Bowes, sententiously. "It seems to me something should be done for her."

"She's done it for herself, I hear," replied Slocumb. "She was married to Nicholas Kovinski this afternoon. He's got a good paying job hauling school children from Holly Centre. Recollect, he took Natupski's horse."

"This case seems to have run to seed," observed

Bowes. "The defense has choked the prosecution silent. As the lanterns are burning out, I propose we go home."

Abner intended to walk, but accepted a lift in Solomon Russell's buggy.

"It beat all creation, that argument you put up for Natupski," piped Russell, as they drove into a darkness accentuated by flashing Northern lights. "And you'd likely spent considerable time beforehand thinking what to say. You must be almighty anxious to keep the Polackers next door to you."

"Honest to man," said Abner, "I was wishing every gol' darned minute that the town had done as it threatened one time, and bought the Judson Buckland shanty for a pest house!"

III

ABNER'S TRY

AFTER his public championship it was generally expected that Abner Slocumb would "do something to civilize Natupski," but Abner seemed inclined rather to talk than to act. Such indeed was the seeming inclination of all West Holly. For instance:

"Cold-blooded critters, ain't they?" said the hired man, as he earned \$2.50 a day watching for the sound of the six-o'clock whistle to be heard in the Slocumb mowing.

"Well, I do' know. Sometimes I think they be, 'n' sometimes I wonder if they be," was Abner's well-qualified response. His wife said Abner always qualified everything, even the cider he drank. Sometimes he put water into it, more often red pepper.

A year had gone by since the great events recorded in the last chapters, but the Natupskis, it will be noticed, were still favorite topics of conversation. In memory West Holly lived as a peaceful neighborhood where nothing happened before the Natupskis. Afterward when any two were gathered together it was no stunt for a third to guess the subject which made their jaws wag.

"Pretty unfeeling the way he goes on," commented the hired party, tossing the thin windrows, and leaving the heavier masses of hay for his employer's attention.

"Yes, he does that," Abner acknowledged, adding,

with a chuckle, "My wife, she can't see through 'em. F'r instance, they set round on soap boxes in the house, but he's bought my hay-cutter to use chopping feed to the barn."

"You don't say!"

Abner indicated he had said. The mind of the man, considerably more agile than his right arm, leaped to another view of the matter.

"How you cal'ate to get along without it?"

"Oh—well—I can chop what little I require by hand, I guess. 'Twon't be convenient, but I can make out. I was mighty glad to complete the bargain, for I needed money the worst way. My wife had set her mind on a parlor carpet. She said, true enough, the old one had been down most ever since we was married. A woman's got to have something new once in a while to make her contented, y'know; besides, I feel she earns a good deal of what the farm produces."

This without reflecting that for a good many years the Slocumb farm had not produced anything worth naming as a profit.

"Besides," continued Abner, with the lordly reasoning which was rapidly reducing him to a genteel penury, "if I feel I gotta have a hay-cutter, I c'n always sell a cow and buy me a new one. Say, what's that noise?"

"I b'n sensing it some time. Seems to come from over Natupski way."

"Well, let it come. We'll let it alone. I started in trying to be a good neighbor to him, but when he destroyed that blueb'ry bush, sez I, go it, there's no cure for obstinacy, any more'n f'r red hair, 'cept dyeing."

Nevertheless, Abner stopped to help the hired man

listen. That worthy had, of course, ardently embraced the first opportunity to quit work.

"Pretty bumptious noise. Sounds like some one dancing a devil's breakdown."

Abner's response was to stab the turf with his fork—and a thunderstorm impending—also to say, "I presume he brung it on himself, but I can't help that. Be you coming or be you not?"

"I be," said the hired man, "soon's I get a fid o' tobacco in my cheek."

A weird agglomeration of sounds was in the Natupski barn. There were the irregular thuds of fierce blows backed by the energy of excitement; mixed with growls, groans, shrieks. Peering into the dusky interior the men presently sorted out the noises. The shrieks came from a cow-stall, wherein no one was visible, the growls were from Kani Natupski, who likewise produced the blows. They were directed at the hay-cutter, and delivered with an ax. Kani was barefooted, his khaki trousers slopped about his ankles, and his black shirt was rapidly working loose from the leather strap by which the little man held himself together. With every blow he leaped into the air and came down on the unlucky machine roaring.

Although the contraption had been bought and (well) paid for, Abner Slocumb felt personally hurt at the way his ex-property was being treated. Perhaps a man had a right to kill his own hay-cutter, but at least the deed shouldn't be consummated without a word of warning.

"Here you, let up, let up!" Abner bawled, advancing boldly. "If the durn thing won't work, let me at it." He thought that possibly Natupski's ire had been raised

by a failure to understand the mechanism. Abner was not quite unacquainted with a form of revenge known as cutting off your nose to spite your face.

Natupski paid no slightest attention to the remonstrance, but from the manger of the inhabited stall popped up three disheveled heads—Mrs. Natupski's, little Wajeiceh's and 'Statia's. The woman merely hissed, "He fierce! he fierce!" and popped her face back under the hay.

Slocumb turned open-mouthed to his hired man, who let discretion temper his valor in the open door.

"Well, what d'ye make of it?"

"Better come home-along. Let 'em squiggle out's they can."

"I'll be durned if I will. Here, what you doing?" he roared at Natupski, letting out his voice so it had to be heard above all the other din.

The banging ceased for a moment, then Natupski, lowering his forehead and coming forward in the blindly butting manner of a temper-mad man who sees red, made for Slocumb, yelling a Polish word which neither New Englander identified with the fearful accusation "Murderer!"—yet such it was.

Abner could not believe his neighbor's charge was made in earnest, it was only when the ax actually began to descend that he realized this was no joke. With a jump on his own part he escaped, while the hired man gave aid by tossing a stone at Natupski and hitting the stall where lurked the woman and children. Redoubled shrieks from that direction seemed to bewilder Natupski; he returned to the hay-cutter.

At the same moment, under advantage from the slight

lull in superior noise, Slocumb found the source of the groans. While his father killed the machine in the dim perspective, and his mother hid in the middle distance, Stanislarni, with two fingers off, peacefully bled to death in the foreground.

A noble picture of misplaced vengeance, pessimistic acquiescence in cruel fate, and general incompetence. Abner Slocumb might not know the first thing about making his business pay, but such a crisis as this put him on his mettle, and he felt able to cope withal.

"Git me a slab o' shingle," he called to the hired man—would that he had used such a tone of command in ordering his own work to be done—"now take my jack-knife and slit off the tail o' my shirt—it's whiter'n yours. Then git over 'n' help me fix a turnyquit to stop this loss o' blood."

In a jiffy the child was out of danger, though Mrs. Natupski crazily tried to prevent their touching Stanislarni by getting in their way, beating her breast, clutching their shoulders, and otherwise misconducting herself. Such behavior, however, was not quite nonunderstandable. Slocumb knew she was begging him not to hurt the kid. His Nancy wouldn't have behaved so, but gritted her teeth and delivered her nearest and dearest up to tortures unnamable had it been considered correct; however, there weren't many womenfolks in this world like Nancy Slocumb, and Abner ought to know, for she told him so many times a year.

Just as the man was completing his "first aid" and Stanislarni had ceased to groan, because he had fainted away, the hay-cutter collapsed with a crash, and lay a corpse, one might say, amidst the hayseed on the well-

polished floor. Kani dropped the ax, spit on his blistered hands, and leaping to the hired man's back soon reduced that Samaritan to a similar ruin. Slocumb did not wait for a greater effort to be directed his way. Snatching the child he ran out of the barn and across the yard. He was followed by an awful jangle of consonants, dried dung and other missiles, but cleared the fence unharmed and broke abruptly on the sweet peace of his sitting-room, where Nancy sat sewing crocheted edging on dish towels which she didn't need.

"That looks like a Natupski young one," she remarked, controlling a great excitement with the aid of a frigid demeanor.

"'Tis."

"How'd you get saddled with him? And where you going?"

"I guess," said Abner, "I'm going to jail, if that hel-lion of a father of his catches me. Hurry up, Nance. I want Dr. Gibson and the 'phone number of the Mercy Hospital, and ten yards o' clean rag, and the hoss hitched up, and aromatic spirits ammony, and a couple o' large pillars, and something to eat, and a wet sponge, and Dr. Chase's recipe book What to Do in Case of Accident page."

"Anything more?" asked Nancy, sarcastic-like, and yet moving so quickly she had most of the requirements assembled even as they were named.

"Yes. A clean shirt."

While he hauled at the mangled garment, and Nance bathed the boy's face from the odoriferous bottle in which chunks of camphor gum had floated in a sea of alcohol ever since the day when Nancy's mother had

inherited it from her grandmother, Abner urged his wife to look out and see if the hired man was back.

"Back from whereabouts?" she wanted to know.

"I left him getting killed in Natupski's barn," returned Slocumb, cool as a cucumber. "The critter's done for my hay-cutter and took my hired help next. I wish to goodness he'd let my belongings be. Darn, ain't that fool ever going to show up?"

"Here he comes, round the road, walking as if he was all lamed up."

Abner called out to effect that he wanted the horse harnessed, but the man glumly declined to do anything more that day until he'd gone home and had "her" put some "arniky" on his back and legs. A loud buzz coming nearer up the road showed up presently as Dr. Gibson in his buggy, Nancy having been successful in catching him at Blanchard Bowes', and convincing him that the Natupski child offered a more pressing case than Mrs. Bowes' nervous prostration of fifteen years' standing.

"Good enough," quoth Abner, when the physician had complimented him on his "first aid" and started with the child to meet the ambulance already on its ten-mile run from the city hospital. He breathed a long sigh of relief, and turned to adjust the gingham tie which he wore, even at haying time, under the turndown collar of his neat cotton shirt. "Whatever bad marks the guardian angels score up against us in the big book up yonder I guess will be partly balanced by the record of this afternoon. We've certainly done ourselves proud."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Nancy. "I sh'd say we had!

And to prove you're right, Abner Slocumb, here comes the rain like cats 'n' dogs 'n' pitchforks tines down."

"Thunder!" grinned Abner, not meaning the exclamation should refer in any particular way to the style of shower just arrived. "And six load o' my best upland grass out in it."

"Well, you're a smart one," sneered Nancy, in reality all puffed up with pride in a husband who put humanity's business ahead of hay.

"Well, it goes to show our reward's in heaven."

"Seeing 's 'tain't here," Nancy snapped.

Abner picked up the *Springfield Republican* and his wife retired to the kitchen, where she proceeded to knock up something specially delectable, elaborate, and expensive for supper. Presently her voice was heard.

"Say, Abner!"

"Spit it out."

"That Polander show any sense o' gratitude for what you done?"

"Pelted me with cow manure."

Nancy's eyes flashed scorn, and she instantly put a double portion of butter into what she was making, at the same time deciding to frost it. Abner certainly merited some reward!

Just as she shut the oven door the hired man came back, smelling like a front yard with a Balm o' Gilead tree in it.

"Thought I might's well make it a full day," he observed, with a glance at the clock. He added that he felt pretty pindling, though, and not more'n able to hold the cat.

"I see Natupski 's I came along," he continued. "Say,

that feller's madder'n tunket. He lets me out, though. Seemed to be right down sorry for lighting onto me like he did. But he's still got it in for you, Slocumb."

Abner rustled his paper, to get at Sam Bowles' real opinions, and remarked he wasn't going around looking for thanks.

"It's worser'n that. I listened to his jargon quite a while, and got it conjured out finally that he blames you for the whole business. Seems to think if you hadn't sold him the cutter he'd have his young one now, good's new."

"Great reasoning," commented Nancy. She didn't see it was about as logical as hers had been when she accused a saloon in Hamson of sending forth her nephew in such a state that he fell asleep on the railroad track.

"'N' what's more, he's a-lotting on doing you some harm, I surmise," the man went on. "I left him turning the grindstone for his ax, and I wouldn't wonder if your young peach trees suffered 'fore sunup."

"Oh, shut up!" yelled Abner, exasperated by this constant reiteration of annoyance. "Don't give me none of your surmises. The watermelons you worry about never get stole."

Brave words, spoken to due effect; yet the warning was Abner's first thought as he wakened next morning when the dawn was hinting at its arrival, and early birds began to remind others not quite so early of that doomed worm. Some one was about at Natupski's barn, and Abner trembled a moment for his trees. He hoped Natupski wasn't going to prove that sort of a fellow. The Slocumbs had lived on this side of the mountain

for half a dozen generations, always taking pride in getting along with their neighbors. Sometimes one had to eat considerable humble pie, but 'twas generally worth it. Abner didn't think much of neighborhood quarrels. You began with a line fence, and whichever was in the right as likely as not got the worst of it in the end. What if Natupski did hack into a tree or so? Best set it down to some varmint and let it go at that. If you took the law on him you'd be forever riding over to the county town, wasting money on lawyers, and in the end he'd likely set your buildings afire.

So Abner turned over, stuffed a ruffled pillow slip into his ear, and was rewarded by not hearing a team drive past at a lively clip. It came back while the Slocumbs were at breakfast. Kani Natupski was driving. The hired man reported he had been to the Mercy Hospital to see little Stanislarni.

"Went the five mile to the depot, caught the first trolley, and was back here in time to do a day's work. My, that feller's got git up and git!"

Abner wished some other fellows had ditto, while Nancy said primly she was pleased (and surprised) the foreigner had as much interest in the child as that showed. It was her unuttered but faithfully held belief that every alien lived in hope of getting his offspring into an institution where, if possible, it would be marooned for childhood. Abner, as taxpayer, was helping to support goodness only knew how many!

The next morning it rained. Abner turned easily on his feathers as he heard the monotonous drip drip on the tin roof of the parlor bay-window, and prepared for another nap. It happened no hay was down to worry

about, and the garden was spoiling for a good soaking. He'd milk late, for once, and tell Nance to cook up a lot of flapjacks. They always ate well at rainy-day breakfasts when he had time to eat them in.

A team drove down the road at a lively clip. He couldn't believe it, even when he woke up Nancy to help, but that Natupski father was making the fifteen-mile journey again, just for the sake of ten minutes beside the cot where Stanislarni luxuriated in such cleanliness and care as had never been his before.

"The dum fool," bleated Abner, later in the day, as he saw the drenched man driving the discouraged horse along the swampy road. Kani was evidently soaked to the skin, and his hat, a cheap derby, had disintegrated to pulp, besides turning most of its dye into a violet hue that mottled his cheeks. As for the animal, it was plainly tired out. Such unwonted journeys, in addition to work in the hay field all day, would ruin anything not an "all-day" horse.

The sight was too much for Abner's philosophy. Dashing his knife into a sea of syrup, he opened the door and begged Natupski to come in and have some breakfast.

"Jest to show I don't bear malice—I mean, you don't. It's all ready 'n' waiting. Grub, you know, Natupski, victuals—eatings—whatever you call it. Come along. Do come along."

And he yelled to Nancy to set the griddle back and fry another mess of cakes.

The sole response of Natupski was a whip cut. It was sent Slocumb way, and accompanied by the objectionable word which Abner now understood meant something

akin to "murderer." Then another cut sent the jaded horse on a last spurt.

Nancy laughed, with a couple of foolish tears in her eyes. "Now I guess you will leave him alone," she remarked. "Here, don't fill up too much on flapjacks. I'm going to open a jar o' the new currant jell to see what it's like."

Of course, they said, he wouldn't go next morning, which promised to be hot and a great hay day; but he did. When he came up the road in the blazing sun, nodding from want of sleep, while his sweat-flecked horse hung its dejected head and limped, one hardly knew which to pity most.

Nancy, one mass of nerves, made a long step to the 'phone. Abner understood. She felt the fear that was agitating him—that the child might be on the dangerous list. While Central got the number, he fled to bovine society. She'd give him the news in a lump. He guessed he could stand it better so.

She stumbled over the words, and he believed the worst, but it was only dander getting up.

"They say—they say the boy's getting along splendid. No complications nor nothing. Got the appetite of a little pig, and has a great time jiggling toys with his well hand. They've just give him some barley sugar to pacify him for taking away a mess o' mouldy stodge his pa brung him."

"There's no—fear o' mortification?" muttered Abner, absent-mindedly offering an astonished calf the measure of oats intended for the horse.

"Nary bit."

A pause, then, "Pity he wouldn't let well enough alone,

'thout getting his betters all work up," she offered, and flounced into the house.

But Natupski wouldn't, and by the end of a week all that part of West Holly was on edge. The wires, once alive with reports about the price of early potatoes or late strawberries, Mrs. Perkins' condition and the best food for orphaned infancy, now buzzed mainly for Natupski. Central could scarcely find an unbusy moment in which to unburden herself of the daily weather. Nobody seemed to care about the barometer and areas of moisture could be as stationary as they pleased without rousing remonstrance. It was only, "Hello—say, the hoss fell twice going by my place. We renced out his mouth with cool spring water and he moved along after a while, but I doubt if he ever manages it again. The man? Oh, the man's all in."

Or perhaps a message such as this went from house to house: "Say, you know the Polander lives t'other side the mountain? Well, watch good, and when you see he don't go by, call me up and I'll go out and look after him. He's more dead 'n alive for want o' rest and liable to fall in his tracks any minute."

Kind women stood by picket fences with perspiring jugs of sweetened water, which Kani did not refuse. Children offered corncob dolls and well-thumbed picture-books, for the father to take to the little boy in the hospital. The father appeared grateful, but nearly always he forgot to give the presents to Stanislarni. His energy was so intensely concentrated on getting to that bedside each day, that he was worse than a log when he got there. Once he began to scold the boy for not recovering more quickly, so as to be on the farm helping

papa by turning the grindstone, treading hay, raking after, weeding the garden, throwing down straw from the high beams, and performing other trifles of labor which unAmericanized Poland held fit for five years. There was a dreadful scene, in the midst of which Kani was turned out of the ward, and the nurses confided to one another a wish that he would now leave the kid to get well in peace.

Vain hope. He shambled in next morning, but slightly improved in temper and appearance. Blanchard Bowes had started what was presently to be a style in West Holly, volunteering the use of a fresh horse to take Natupski from his house to the station, while the jaded one recuperated in a roomy box stall. After that the journeys were made with more comfort, though the man himself showed the results of rising at 3 a.m., after a long evening mowing by moonlight.

The chief sufferer was Abner Slocumb, who got even less sleep than Natupski. He had taken to walking the floor nights, because the state of things got on his nerves, and Nancy didn't know whether to give him another dose of the spring's sulphur and 'lasses, or to mix an infusion of wild cherry bark with his cider.

It did not help Abner toward tranquillity that most of the neighbors seemed convinced he was somehow to blame for the loss of Stanislarni's fingers. Natupski's description of the affair, in a language largely not understood by his hearers, was responsible for this impression. The little Polander had got it in for Abner, and, one couldn't believe, not without reason!

Nancy used to slip into the hen-house and talk to the chickens. She told them that what she mainly abhorred

was the utter uselessness of it all. There no need to have been an accident, to begin with, if the Natupskis had any sense. Who ever heard of a five-year-old child let meddle with a hay-cutter? And then if your young one did get hurt why send good money after bad by destroying property? Above all, what did possess the ijit that was willing to let the little tyke lie on the barn floor and die, to go every mortal day fifteen mile to look at him? That was the most useless performance of all. The boy was doing fine; and yet a fool man had to frazzle himself, kill a horse, and maul the town out of plumb when he'd be better employed tending to his summer work like a sane being. Nancy believed in keeping emotions on a taut line of practical result; she loved Abner to death, but if he died tomorrow there would be a great feeling of satisfaction in having made over the pillow-ticks in the spring, and she would be quite capable of quelling her grief sufficiently to knock up plenty of flour victuals for the funeral.

With the passing of the last of the six weeks, West Holly's interest in Natupski began to wane. People wondered how much longer they would be expected to furnish horses to haul his good-for-nothing carcass to the trolley? Stanislarni was reported as up and larking about the corridors. He had kicked a nurse who objected to being bawled at in evil-sounding Polish every time her apron tickled the boy. She couldn't believe it a word of endearment. It sounded something quite different. Anyway, Miss O'Brien was down on all these foreigners, having the true pride in her native America of an adaptive girl three generations from ancestors who had "plenty Gaelic" and a scarcity of anything else.

There came an evening when Natupski, it was understood, was up a tree. No one offered to take him to the car next morning. Even when he called and looked wistful at their back doors they did not melt. Blanchard Bowes was cutting alfalfa. Hiram Farrar murmured something about cowpeas. The poor little man, with his usual waste of effort, trotted as many miles about the neighborhood as he was trying to save himself, and after all got no horse. Lashing his own legs with the whip he carried, perhaps with a view to keeping himself from going to sleep standing up, Natupski kicked open the Slocumb gate and stamped his way across the piazza.

Consternation reigned in that establishment. The hired man panted in at another door, giving it as his opinion that the Polisher had come to lick Abner. This was delivered in an excited whisper, but Nancy spoke her mind audibly.

"If you, Abner Slocumb, demean yourself so far's to talk to him you're a bigger fool than I take you to be," she said.

Then she went on putting nutcakes into a pail. It was their wedding anniversary tomorrow and they always celebrated it by going off somewhere. This time, luckily, the Giffordville Fair was opening just in time. They'd drive over, starting before light, and to save money—for Nancy, when on pleasure bent, was like John Gilpin's wife in having a frugal mind—she had manufactured a magnificent loaf of cake that was going to get her through the gate on an Exhibitor's ticket—besides, as likely as not, taking a prize that would pay for baiting the horse and all.

The little man stood and knocked with the whip butt

for some time. He could hear steppings about within, but no one seemed disposed to answer. Finally he stumbled away.

"By gum," said the hired man, "he's got cheek. Ain't going home, but right out to the barn."

Abner felt it necessary to follow. The two confronted each other in the growing twilight of the horse stall.

"Looky here," remonstrated the New Englander, "don't you think you're getting pretty bunkum? This barn don't go with the Judson Buckland place, you know."

Of course the sarcasm was thrown away. Natupski had an eye for the horse and nothing else. He tried brazenly to get by Abner's bulky form and disturb the peace of that splendid animal that stood calmly munching bits of its bed, while careful to disturb neither the cat that rested on the natural saddle of its back, nor the hen that had chosen to hatch a belated brood in the manger.

"Him," said Natupski, briefly, but with assurance, "Me got to have him."

"Well, you won't, and that's flat. I've a use for my own hoss as it happens, but if 'twas otherwise——"

Natupski, calm as if eating apples, began to pick up portions of the harness which hung by the stable entrance.

"Here, you! Put that headstall where you found it! I tell you this hoss is going to haul me and my wife to Giffordville cattle show tomorrow. And even if 'twasn't——"

Suddenly an idea of being refused his boon filtered

into Natupski's brain. He dropped the bits of leather, and stood like a child whose snow house has suddenly collapsed in a February thaw—a child so young he can't realize ice won't last the year through. The wildness of his red-rimmed eyes, bloodshot from loss of sleep, sought the top of the barn, where the light of the afterglow penetrated from a great latticed cupola, and then his gaze turned out of doors. Mentally, it is to be presumed, he went again the rounds of the inhospitable neighborhood, whence his feet had taken him to Slocumb's last. Perhaps there was some natural pride in the man, perhaps he had not wanted to ask this favor from one whom he had elected should be an enemy. He had forced himself to forgive Slocumb. He acted as one who had not reckoned on refusal. All his energy had been concentrated in forgiveness, he had none left to use in pleading. He went all to pieces, fell on his knees, blubbered, tried to clasp Abner's hand as that of a patron, said things he had never thought to say in America, where he had understood all were equal.

Abner had been offended at his effrontery, he was disgusted at seeing the man play baby.

"I wouldn't lend ye my hoss if he was twins," he roared. "Git up and git out."

A little flash of the old anger sent Natupski off shaking his fist.

Abner went into the house.

"Of course he didn't get what he come after?" asked Nancy.

"Of course not," said Abner.

He did not walk the floor that night, but hopped into bed feeling firm and cool, as when a boy he would dive

deeper than any other in the old swimming-pool. He thought he was going to have a great night for sleep, and start fresh as a daisy for the fair. His mind was pretty easy—the interest on the mortgage didn't fall due until the crops would be in, and perhaps they would all do better than he was afraid they wouldn't. The sheets felt grateful to his tired limbs. He always did enjoy a cricket's chirping. Nance's heavy breathing ought to send one off directly. Only—he couldn't sleep. His thoughts would wander right away from his own vine-embowered dwelling to that one over the way, whence all leafage had been rudely swept. He could not think of his own bedroom, with its matted floor, drawn-in rug, cretonne upholstered shirtwaist box and bureau covered with crocheted mats over pink silesia. It went to Natupski's, that vagrant mind; it saw the rooms which hadn't been swept out since the Natupskis moved in, where the moonbeams struggled through windows well curtained by films of dirt, and where a large family lived without any of the things he and Nancy thought necessary for two. He remembered Nancy observing once that she didn't suppose, judging from the Natupskis, there was such a thing as a pincushion in Poland. This seemed to him hardly likely to be true, since there must be rich folks in that far-off land, who lived decently. He supposed what strained out into America was the dregs. But to think of any folks without a pincushion, or a pipe-rack, or a silk string to hang neckties on! Maybe West Holly folks were victims of "house pride," but they treated by and large alike. Even that lady pauper, Mrs. Anderson, had got the town fathers to subscribe to a fashion paper for her!

What he anticipated—a noise. Nancy stirred quickly, too. Perhaps she had not been as fast asleep as she had pretended. Abner leaped to the window, softly withdrew the screen, and leaned afar out. He could hear the bed creak as Nancy sat up. Ten minutes went by, then Abner replaced the screen and slipped under the counterpane.

“Any one to the barn?” Nancy whispered.

“Oh, no,” said Abner. “All’s tight as a drum that-a-way.”

She did go to sleep then, and he was able to steal out unnoticed in the deepest darkness of the second morning hour. He did not light the lantern until safely hidden by the barn door. Horse, cat, and hen were alike amazed at the disturbance. He sent pussy hunting and led the horse softly into the barn floor, where he tackled. A few armfuls of hay spread on the gravel enabled him to pass to the road in something near absolute silence.

“Nance don’t know it,” he sniggered, “but a durn good midnight hoss thief was sp’iled in making me. It’s what I was cut out for.”

A dim light flickered in Natupski’s ell. You couldn’t call any room there either kitchen or parlor, for there was a bed in the apartment holding the cook-stove, and the coarse lace curtains stretched across the foreroom windows hid only an accumulation of junk. Mrs. Natupski sat out of doors. Wajeiceh and ’Statia were doing something dangerous in which themselves, the cat, and a butcher-knife were involved. Mr. Natupski was not to be seen.

“Where’s he?” asked Abner, wondering if he were talking to a blank wall.

The woman got up and pointed down the road. Then she walked a few steps, nodded solemnly, and sat down. Abner understood. The poor creature had started on a desperate tramp. But perhaps one might catch up with him yet. There was a nickel clock on the mantel; he took it to the woman and she pointed to midnight. Kani would be almost at the depot by now—unless he had fallen in a faint. Quite forgetting Nance and the wedding day, Abner got into his own buggy and shook the reins. As he drove, with one leg hanging out, in the approved fashion of West Holly, he wondered how he could make it plain to Natupski that he bore no grudge—not even for last night's untold injuries—and that this softening was not brought about through fear, but because after all a good American, raised in a clean home and educated nine winter terms in the red schoolhouse, felt he owed more than common kindness to an alien minus such advantages. Natupski wasn't manly, nor sensible, but maybe if neighbored right such qualities could be driven into him.

Due to overmuch prodding of bushy roadsides, Abner arrived at the depot after the first trolley had left. The sun was up and the day gave indications of being hotter than blixon. The depot always was a stuffy, uncomfortable place, anyhow. Shut in by hills, it nestled close to the river, now at its lowest, gleaming back of the paper mill like a tiny silver scarf held in place by jutting jewels of rocks. It glistened but never seemed to be getting anywhere; so rapid was its flow that no wavelet was visible. Abner had his fill of looking at it, of seeing the hands pour forth from their funny little double cottages to be sucked up by the factory door; of driving

the horse from one bit of shade to another. The car came back, but no Natupski got out. Abner felt puzzled. Could the chap be lying up there on the road, suffering, in some hideaway place he had missed? In spite of a yearning stomach he waited another hour, and then began the weary drive back to where Nance would wait in a worry that would quickly turn to a real mad fit. He didn't blame her, either. What had possessed him to go and spoil the whole day for the sake of a miserable little ungrateful no-account runt?

It was the utter lack of any gratitude on Natupski's part that galled most. Abner didn't hide the doings of his right hand from his left. He knew he'd been a mighty good neighbor to Natupski, right from the start. He'd made no mean remarks when Mrs. Buckland sold to Polanders, and he'd jumped in quick to save the blueberry bush. And mighty few men would let a lot of good upland hay go to ballyhack to try and argufy with a crazy man. What had he got for it? Only abuse. Not an indication the miserable Polander sensed any thankfulness whatsoever. Yet he supposed the cardinal virtues were the same in any language.

As he approached his own dwelling Abner dismounted, to let the horse bury its nose in the roadside hogshhead, which kept ever full of sweet water, trickling from a far-away spring in open troughs of log.

Who was this dancing along the wheel tracks? Natupski—actually Natupski. And beside him Stanisłarni, in all the glory of a clean face and hygienic promise of a close haircut, principal advantages fetched from the hospital, unless one counted much more English than his parents could understand. The face was rapidly being

disfigured by large chunks of pink frosting from a hunk of cake which somehow seemed familiar to Abner.

A team, driving off in the opposite direction, showed how father and son had made the journey. Probably some good-natured hospital doctor had been the charioteer, and they had gone Hamson way.

"See! see!" yelled Natupski, jerking his child into the air by the leaping exuberance of his joy. "My little Stanislarni come home! My little Stanislarni come home!"

"And then," as Abner would report by and by, "if the crazy loon didn't up and kiss me in two places!"

Slocumb escaped as fast as possible and after comforting the horse with oats got into the kitchen, where Nancy, smiling as a basket of chips, was rapidly unpacking luncheon pails and reducing the pantry to a complete forgetfulness of ever having been disturbed for an impending picnic.

As he suspected, she had cut the cake.

"Natupski's boy's home," she said, snippy-like.

"As if I didn't know it. He's led me a pretty dance. Got my hired man out of commission, sp'iled a good mess o' hay, ruined my reputation, girdled six fine peach trees, and made us miss the first celebration since we was married. Still, I'd rather have his ill-will than his gratitude. Bussing me twice in the public highway!"

"I didn't know about the trees," said Nancy, looking at the cake as if she wished she could put it together again.

"I didn't intend you should," returned Abner. "It's

a dead secret betwixt me and him. Done last night when we'd orter been asleep. But that smacking—it happened much as five minutes ago—take down the receiver quiet, Nance, and see what they're saying about it along the line."

IV

TWO OLD BIRDS ON ONE BOUGH

YEARS before Kani Natupski knew there was an America, a fortissimo suite, played pianissimo, sent sound waves through West Holly from the old Pinkney place, next door to what would ultimately be Natupski's (the other next-door, not Slocumb's).

Ma'am Pinkney died and left a will, which satisfied neither of her daughters.

"Cat's foot!" exclaimed Julia Farrar, she that was a Pinkney. "I should think mother might have remembered me with something worth having, as I've not had to be supported since I was seventeen and married Hiram Farrar."

Julia Farrar was given all the Pinkney land abutting on Farrar acres.

"Mother knew what she was after, I don't doubt," observed Juletta Pinkney, "but she evidently failed to consider that my youth was sacrificed to her and to father."

Juletta received the Pinkney mansion and what was left of the land with Julia Farrar's share subtracted. This was the worst forty acres.

The sisters divided the personal property.

"Suffering ages!" remarked Julia Farrar. "What under the sun did mother mean? Me to take the parlor sofa and you to keep the chairs! You to have two vol-

umes 'Pamela,' and me the rest, so neither of us'll ever be acquaint with the whole story! Mother must have been a doddering ijit. I think we could break the will."

"Mother," returned Julia, "presumably understood her own mind. Is there anything special you hanker after, Julia?"

"I don't care a dutch curse," cried Julia Farrar, "for anything but that Rising Sun quilt with all the pieces of my school dresses in it. And the pink luster set. I'd just as soon call it all off for the pink luster set."

"You may have the quilt of your selection," said Juletta, "and I will balance it by one of the hand-woven blankets. As far as the chiny goes, I presume mother had it in her mind when she said things was to be divided."

"Good Lord and Tom Malindy," Julia Farrar responded. "Do you set there in that fiddle-backed chair and tell me to my face our mother didn't suppose one or t'other of us would have the full set? Juletta Pinkney, you act like a natural-born fool, same as you did when you wouldn't hear to Hiram Farrar and left him for me. Looks likely mother believed I'd be satisfied to accept six cups and sassers and leave the same for you."

"Certainly not," asserted Julia. "Mother wished us to divide them. Will you take the cups or the saucers? It is quite immaterial to me which I keep."

War was declared from that moment, a bitter war, which kept West Holly all wrought up. For virulence no quarrel equals a family quarrel; and Julia Farrar, after accepting the cups, was able to exasperate Juletta with much better success than she could have employed with any mere acquaintance.

West Holly, with the usual neighborhood propensity to arrange (and well arrange) the affairs of other people, held that Juletta was to be envied. She had a house and forty acres. It would cost her nothing to live—absolutely nothing! A cup of tea and a piece of bread would make a meal for an old maid. They wouldn't expect her to even set the table, but just take a bite standing in the pantry. She would be well able to have a black silk every five years, shingle the house, which had needed it since the Civil War, and subscribe liberally to the Methodist denomination.

But Juletta farmed according to precedent, which put always the same crop in the same place. If the potato patch did not yield a sufficiency of potatoes she bought more, but planted nothing extra another year. It was the manner of the Pinkneys, and they had been growing poorer for six generations, ever since the first Pinkney came over the Bay Path from Dorchester and secured one of those preposterous grants, ten miles long and half a mile broad, by which Holly was divided when it was "Outward Commons."

Quintus Pinkney, of the fifth generation, had fully established the family ruin by an attempt to redeem the Pinkney acres. He died land poor, bequeathing Sextus a bewildering variety of lawsuits.

Now there was only Juletta, who said it seemed as if all nature and the fraternity of hired men were in league against one poor old maid. Abner Slocumb informed her she had no monopoly on the attentions of potato bugs, tomato worms, and men afflicted with inertia and gross and confirmed habits of intoxication.

"I wonder," said Juletta, "how the women managed

in the old times? My maternal grandmother was left alone when her husband went to the French and Indian wars. On his return he found she had settled the mortgage, while the farm was twice the bigness of what he had left."

Juletta did not consider that her maternal grandmother went dressed in one gown, probably linsey-woolsey, and was up early and down late. As for grandmother's house, it had been furnished with bare necessities. The pink luster was after her day.

Juletta performed no outdoor labor. She sat, white-handed, in the parlor, covering the backs of old envelopes with figures proving how much poorer she would be after she had paid off the harvest hands. Then she made the envelopes into squills, being economical, if not prudent.

There came a day in summer when Mrs. Judson Buckland jubilantly hailed her spinster neighbor.

"Glory be!" she shouted. "I've sold the farm."

Juletta knew she had wanted to sell it ever since the death of Judson Buckland. In fact, she had wanted to sell it for so long that there had ceased to be any disquieting novelty in the idea. But now that it was sold Juletta shivered with apprehension. She felt changes all about. Hints had been in the air some time, but she had tried to ignore them. Talk about trolleys around the mountain, putting green hay in barns, using engines to uproot stumps, rotating crops, curing consumptives on piazzas. She had listened, but fixed her own mind against innovations. She determined never to ride on electric cars or store uncured hay, and if she was blessed with weak lungs she would shut herself in a room with an

airtight stove and make an edifying end in the good old fashion.

But a Polish family next door was making the new New England come extremely close!

"You don't need to neighbor with 'em," snapped Mrs. Buckland, who could not have forborne going to tea with a cannibal, had one happened to buy near her, and "I guess it won't ever come to that," returned Juletta, in her customary mulish mildness. It never did. Miss Pinkney lived almost two years in the next house to the Natupski family without being seen by any of that family. This was possible because Juletta seldom went abroad, not caring to risk meeting Julia Farrar. She viewed the passing from a pantry window shielded with slats. And though there was a narrow piazza on the south side, Juletta never sat out. The Pinkneys never had sat out.

All the more startling, therefore, was the unearthly yell that disturbed Kani Natupski one spring morning, the second year after his arrival in West Holly, when he was doing violence to West Holly agricultural traditions and a piece of ground. The yell was most amazing in that it did not come from any part of his own domain. There yells were common. Marinki yelled at the children, Stanislarni yelled at the cow, 'Statia and Wajeiceh at the calves; even the small baby yelled at the cat, and that pampered animal meekly obeyed orders and stood still to have its tail pulled.

Yes, there was a small baby, and its arrival had been absolutely devoid of excitement. Kani, recollecting the birth of 'Statia, when both doctor and nurse had been called in attendance on Olka, was very grateful to

Marinki for having followed him from Poland. This, despite the disappointment of another girl, and the queer fact that Marinki herself seemed proud of the affair, and would call the little one by her own name.

Kani could not dream, nor would his wife tell, that she rejoiced in a girl because she hated to see him with the wee 'Statia in his arms. She intended to provide plenty of both kinds in her own brood.

But this yell came from the old Pinkney place, where—when had a yell ever come from the old Pinkney place? Even the family quarrel had been conducted in ladylike tones, and after sending Julia Farrar the cups Juletta had retired to an upper room and whimpered.

On this May morning she yelled, right in her own front yard, among the budding peonies and fading lilies of the valley. Natupski looked over the fence. A little woman with white hair was wringing her hands as if they were clothes newly washed. Her snowy curls, which, from a parting, hung on either side of her face, swayed against the two pairs of spectacles on her sharp little nose. The slender braid of hair that usually mingled with the curls until it went to join the "done up" section in the rear, had fretted itself loose, and made a dissipated appearance in the sunshine, being customarily so set at liberty only in connection with a night cap.

"What matter?" asked Natupski.

Miss Pinkney closed her eyes, whirled three times, and pointed. Her index finger was directed right over the way, where the bewildered man saw a robin carrying straw.

"Hei?" he grunted, and climbed the fence. Miss

Pinkney shrieked, "Don't look at the door! I can't stand it if you look at the door!"

Natupski looked. A weird fur bundle hung on the latch.

"Little small cats. Your little small cats, missus?"

"Heavens, no! I'm Miss Pinkney!"

This explained nothing to Kani Natupski, who did not know that every Pinkney came into the world a cat-hater. He had lived in West Holly nearly two years, but he had never heard about Perry Pinkney, who started West in '49, with a bowie knife, a pistol, and one clean shirt, but came home in consequence of being put into a stage coach where the other passenger wore a coat on which a cat had lain. Natupski merely thought it proper to make a closer inspection of the door's adornment.

"He dead," was the comment conveyed to the distracted lady. As she answered nothing beyond a gasp, he went on to ask, "You want him?"

"No, no! Take 'em away! That is, don't take 'em away while I can see you touch 'em. I can't bear to think that you can bear to touch 'em. Ah! Ah!"

Down she sank under the old cherry tree and beat her heels in frenzy, until this brought reminder that the tree sheltered a great ant hill.

West Holly, knowing Juletta Pinkney only by her seventy-five years of genteel behavior, would never have believed she knew so many excited woman tricks as were displayed that morning to Kani Natupski. For half an hour she kept him jiggling back and forth from the door where hung the martyred kittens, to his own fence.

"Take 'em," she would scream, "please take 'em and hide 'em," but when he essayed doing so she decided that

the very idea was too ghastly for contemplation. The climax was reached when he got tired of bothering with the old woman, and remembered his neglected work. So, "Out of way!" he bawled, and pushing her toward the Japanese quince bush, went over and untied the bunch of fur. Miss Pinkney, entirely out of her head for the moment, flung herself at him, with dreadful consequences. Never, while life remained, would she forget the shock of that collision with the filthy man and the dead animals. She tumbled into the house and lived the rest of the day on camphor-soaked lumps of sugar.

The sensation lasted, mingled with an awful shame. To have lost her dignity, and before such a spectator! Juletta Pinkney came to hate Kani Natupski more than she hated her sister Julia Farrar; for he had been present when she went mad, while Julia Farrar was only the probable cause of the madness. Whenever the Natupskis came into their yard and exchanged remarks in their native tongue, Miss Juletta fancied they were shouting abuse at her. If the children pelted the atmosphere with gravel, after the aimless manner of children who play so seldom they hardly know how to go about it, she imagined their father had told them to pepper the Pinkney house. That the neighbors called and never spoke about cats struck her as a suspicious circumstance. Of course Julia Farrar would have told what she intended doing, and Juletta couldn't imagine that chattering Polish monkey keeping a still tongue, either.

Miss Pinkney, from living alone, had a somewhat magnified sense of her own importance in West Holly. People were a good deal more concerned about the long drouth than about Juletta Pinkney's affairs. Mr. and

Mrs. Natupski had no idea why she gave them so many black looks. They now saw her often, because she used the back door, which was on their side, after the affair of the kittens had caused the South door to seem haunted.

At the Pinkney house the front door was never opened except to take the coffin out.

Juletta used to appear pretty often to grind pink luster bits into condition powder for chickens. For the better affliction of Julia Farrar, Juletta had gone to baking pies in the saucers. Whenever one went to pieces in the oven she ground the remnants into powder, lest her sister should somehow secure the pieces and restore a saucer by sour milk cement and twenty-four hours' boiling.

It was rumored that every time Juletta did this, Julia Farrar went out and smashed a cup against the side of the barn. It seemed an incredible story, because Julia Farrar was a great hand to keep everything. She never wilfully threw away so much as an old hoopskirt. She thought as like as not they'd come round again. Still Sabrina Perkins, who knew everything, stated it as a "positive fact" that when two saucers alone remained to Juletta, Julia Farrar had just a couple of cups.

On the 12th of July they finished haying at Juletta Pinkney's. The news went all over the neighborhood that they finished haying at Juletta Pinkney's. The drouth had made the crop light, and then it had been decided that the upland wouldn't pay for cutting. The upland, which had filled two barns and left enough for a respectable stack in the time of Quartus Pinkney! On the same day Juletta examined her bank-book, after paying the men, and saw her balance one of two figures.

On the mahogany before her lay a notice from the bank in Hamson, calling attention to interest considerably overdue on the mortgage.

Miss Pinkney sighed gently, but did not lose her dignity. This was only ruin that confronted her; she felt that she could meet ruin like a Pinkney. Besides, it didn't come suddenly. It had been drawing nearer every minute since she and Julia Farrar had read the will.

"If you had left me everything, mother," she said, in mild reproach, to the simpering crayon portrait above the narrow mantel, "I could probably just have stuck it out and put up a stone for myself in the graveyard. The land was worth about \$3,000 and I certainly couldn't last beyond 83. Father passed on at 83, and grandfather at 81. As it is, mother, I'll have an auction and make inquiries about a good Old Ladies' Home."

The bills came out from Hamson, smelling of fresh ink, and were stuck up under the sign at the cross roads, on the schoolhouse fence, Natupski's corn-barn, the rear of Solomon Russell's buggy, and other places of public information. On the 10th of August there would be sold, at the residence of the late Sextus Pinkney, Esq., house, barn, forty acres of land, together with stock, tools, vehicles, and household furniture including . . .

Two pink luster saucers were not especially named, but they were in many minds. Would Juletta allow them to be placed in the sale, thence, of course, to go into possession of the Farrars? Would she bake a farewell pie in each? Would she carry them with her to the Old Ladies' Home in Mifflin Grove, where it was understood she was to seek admission, her credentials being five hundred dollars in money and a black silk gown?

On the 10th there was a large turnout. Juletta guessed it equaled her grandfather's funeral, which was still remembered as one of note. Quintus Pinkney, dying, had given orders that no clergyman of any denomination was to attend his obsequies. But, it being difficult to realize a funeral without a minister, it was finally decided to invite three, a Methodist from Hamson, the Holly Centre Congregationalist, and a Baptist who happened to be visiting in town. The last no sooner entered the house than the dead man rose in his coffin and towered above the assembly.

"You were only a young girl, I've heard mother say," remarked Mrs. Perkins, who was keeping Miss Juletta company in the seclusion of the middle room, while the auction went on, "but you were perfectly cool and collected, though every one else, without exception, fled in hysterics. She always used to hold you up as such an example of deportment. 'Juletta Pinkney never loses her head,' she would tell us. You never have lost your head, have you, Miss Pinkney?"

Miss Pinkney, slightly confused, turned the conversation once more to her grandfather's funeral. "There was no need to get excited, Sabrina," she remarked. "It wasn't grandpa's ghost come to be revenged because we were giving him a proper funeral. There was merely a board dry-rotted in the parlor floor, and it gave way at the coffin foot. Fifty-eight carriages followed the hearse. I believe there are just as many here today."

"The crackers and cheese won't begin to go round," commented Mrs. Perkins, "but I suppose it's just as well, as there's nothing to drink. There's Solomon Russell torturing the poor old pump again. Hear it sigh."

"Seem's if I never knew such a dreadful dry spell," said Juletta, to make conversation. In her heart she was all tremulous with a sense of the violence being done to the Pinkneys' corn-sheller by putting it under the hammer. But she maintained a firm front. No one but the Polish shrimp should ever boast of seeing Juletta Pinkney give way. "It never was so when I was a girl," she went on. "I recollect just once the well give out. I was about sixteen. And it must have been something unusual, because father rejoiced in the chance to clean it."

"He found a lot of curious truck, didn't he?"

"I don't think so. There was a set of teeth and a few old shoes and the collar of a dog we'd lost unaccountably, but nothing remarkable for a well that had never been cleaned since it was dug."

She hardly knew what she was saying, for Mr. Natupski had entered the yard.

"There's the Polander," said Mrs. Perkins, "come for a meal of crackers, I s'pose. My, how the folks are laughing."

An exquisite joke had just been played on Natupski. He had been nodded to by half a dozen men. When he ducked his head in response the auctioneer declared him the owner of a lot being worked off, comprising two yards of rusty stove pipe, a Pub. Doc. for 1872, and a mangy stuffed fox.

"And sold for fifty cents," said the auctioneer, "to Mr. Natupski. Change for a dollar? Certainly. Kindly remove your goods."

Of course Natupski didn't need the stuff, and was torn with rage to see half a dollar disappear. He tried to say he only wanted to bid on the Jersey cow, but

nobody would listen to broken English in the hubbub. Anyway, cows weren't being sold just then. Only trash was being sold. Every country auction furnishes much trash, and the Pinkney garret had yielded many quick-silverless mirrors, tableless legs, and bottomless band-boxes. The crowd had found it an uneventful day, since most of the interesting items had been bid in by a strange man who didn't seem to care what he paid. "Might as well have some fun," said Abner Slocumb, and bid a nickel "sight unseen" for which he secured a leaky demi-john.

Then Solomon Russell was implored to "be a sport," and accepted, for a dime, something described as "an article of universal household utility," which turned out a cradle.

After that Natupski was made to appear eager. They got him in a ring and slapped him on the back so that he always nodded when the bidding had gone high enough. Soon he owned several sermons in pamphlets with the long "s," a number of broken clocks, a coffin plate, a clapper without a churn, and some dozens of cracked dishes.

The last had been hastily made into a "lot" by Mrs. Perkins, when news came that Polish Natupski was bidding like a wild man—would buy anything, or could be made to appear ready to do so.

"After all," said Abner Slocumb, when, the interval of fooling being over, a decorous move was made to go into the house and sell tipup tables and mahogany high-boys, "you needn't get your dander up, Natupski. You ain't spent but \$2.60, and the young ones 'll pick a lot of playthings out of the truck."

Natupski had no words for the benighted American. That a sane man should be suspected of a readiness to pay \$2.60 for playthings! Children didn't need playthings if you gave them plenty of work. Besides, he needed that \$2.60, because his quarterly interest would be due by and by. He was always saving for that quarterly interest, even when one quarter had just been paid. He was not like the American farmers, who paid half what was owing, and then went off and celebrated.

He didn't go into the house, because he was afraid they would make him buy something more. He got a wheelbarrow and carted his purchases home. He didn't know it was etiquette to let the crowd have these jokes to kick and smash, just as it was a generous performance to buy uneaten pies at church suppers and play roll the platter with them in the highroad.

The auction got talked over at Slocumbs' supper.

"I don't think much of it," said Nancy, deftly dishing out dip toast. "It wasn't fair and square. 'Positively without reservation' the bills read, and 'twas no such thing."

"Can't see why not," returned Abner. "They trotted out a lot of stuff I'd put in a bonfire. Poor Natupski bought a coffin plate."

"Two very valuable things wasn't put up."

"What was they?"

"Those two pink luster sassers."

Abner roared. "I suppose you women lotted on seeing 'em sold sep'rate."

"There'd have been bidders. If we ever have an auction——"

"Don't talk about it," cried Abner, averse to any com-

parison of his own course with that which had brought the great Pinkney family to so sad an end. "I was brung up to call the auctioneer the man who followed the undertaker. But unless the Charter Oak bu'sts, Nance, you'll find I'm worth more dead than alive. What's that hid way back of the teapot? Loaf of cake? Pass it this way so I can get the taste of the bread out of my mouth."

Two chunks having been devoured, he asked, "What was you so concerned about those saucers for?"

"Well, I didn't know—if they wasn't run up too high—I might bid one of 'em in——"

"And give it to Julia Farrar! More fool you! She and Farrar can afford to have Have-land, or whatever the latest dewdab is, only they're so condemned near."

"I should give it to Miss Pinkney," said Nancy. "It's a sin and a shame the way she's come out, just because she wasn't a master good manager. And only of her own will can any one have a clear title to that house, because her granther left a settlement in the North chamber to any of his unmarried female grandchildren. I've seen the words—North room, passage in the entry thereto, and two shelves in the butt'ry. She needn't go to no Old Ladies' Home 'thout she's perfectly willing."

"Well," quoth Abner, "what's the use setting like a queen in a North bedroom when you ain't left yourself nothing to set on, and no victuals to eat, and not even a pink sasser to eat from?"

"She's got the sassers," returned Nancy. "That's what I was speaking of. She held 'em out, so it wasn't a sale fair and square."

Abner stared. "You was desirous of spending some of my cash in getting 'em back for her—" he began.

"Certainly. I want her to have 'em. But it's the principle of the thing that makes me mad," retorted Nancy, as she retired to the kitchen. Abner was so stupid. "I'd most rather talk to a cat than a man," she told herself. "Quite as much satisfaction. Don't neither of 'em know what you're aiming at."

At this very moment Juletta Pinkney was glancing about her old house with a candle that guttered grease over her bare hand, looking for those very saucers. She had hidden them—this is really romantic!—in the secret drawer of Granther Pinkney's secretary. Then she had taken them out, because the crowd was about to come in and start bidding on the furniture. She was sure she put them into her carpet bag, which stood half packed in the middle room. No one had been in the middle room but herself and Sabrina Perkins. Yet the saucers had disappeared.

Sabrina, who was waiting to get home and take Miss Pinkney with her, called sharply from the road.

"It's most dark. Better leave things till morning. I've just got to get back and set bread."

Juletta's old white face appeared at an upstairs window, looking, in the twilight, a good deal like the ghost of the last Pinkney.

"You trot along, Briny," she said, with her (almost) never varied self-command. "I've mislaid something of consequence. I'm going to find it if it takes all night."

Mrs. Perkins drove off.

"I wouldn't stay in the poky old place after sunset," she assured herself, "but I s'pose it's second nature to her."

Any stranger would have thought the rooms especially

ghostly this evening, with bureaus standing where they didn't belong, in front of windows; every uncarpeted board having its own squeak, and all the closet doors standing wide open as if to give the skeletons egress. But Juletta didn't mind. Besides being used to the old house, all her interest was concentrated on finding those pink luster saucers.

She searched and searched, through her own property, and that which had been bid in by the man who bought the house. She searched until it was getting on for nine o'clock, and the candle went out. It went out while she was in the North room, which was yet hers by right of inheritance, under her grandfather's will.

"We sha'n't pass the papers until tomorrow," she thought, and threw open the shutters that she might take a look on what was probably the last property holding of a Pinkney in West Holly. The moon had risen and did something to atone for the fact that Juletta's once carefully tended kerosene lamps were scattered all over the neighborhood.

She sat down on the edge of a bed which had been stripped to its bare cords. It was horrid to have to go over to Sabrina's, to stop right in the face of the change she, who hated change, had wrought in West Holly. Mrs. Judson Buckland was in the right of it, when she moved the very next minute after the sale was completed. Several had asked Miss Pinkney to visit round while good weather lasted, but she guessed she wouldn't.

"I'll put myself into the home tomorrow and be done with it," she declared. "If I can't be Miss Pinkney of the old Pinkney place no more, I'll go and be an inmate

in an institution. I always did hate betwixts and betweens."

She rose to depart, and then she heard a noise. Somebody had come crossways through the homelot, under the plum trees. Somebody got over the wall down by the willows, knew how to avoid the old dry ditch back of the well, and tripped as with accustomed feet to the door in the shed.

This door in the shed was a Pinkney secret. All the world knew of the front door, the South door; even the Natupskis could see the back door. But the door in the shed was so artfully hidden that no Pinkney had ever locked it at night, even with money in the house. It was approached by such a winding way, through piles of seasoned wood, past pitfalls of swill barrel, up steps and down, with avoidance of other stairs that led into a workshop and a back butt'ry, that no one could successfully negotiate it who had not been brought up in the house.

"Whoever you are," said Juletta, with an awful calm, and looking like a polite old wraith in the moonlight, "you came in through the shed, so you're either an ancestor's spirit, or Julia Farrar. Well, you're Julia Farrar!"

A little amazement crept into her tone, but she repressed it immediately. She and Julia Farrar hadn't met for almost a quarter of a century, but the house was hers until tomorrow, and she would show she was mistress of the place and of herself.

Julia Farrar was brazen and outspoken. Brazen and outspoken as she had been forty-nine years before, when, breaking a sentimental deadlock, she had roused her

sister at midnight, with the request, "Don't meach, Juletta, speak out straight. Do you want Hiram Farrar or be you planning to give him the mitten? Because if the last is your intention I'm going after him myself."

"Ain't you got kerosene?" she now asked, just as if she had been talking to Juletta every day for the past twenty-five years. "I'd better have fetched a lantern."

She sat down at one of the front windows. The moon shone becomingly on her broad, pasty face, making her a fairly good-looking woman. Usually she could "never hold a candle" to Juletta, but just now Juletta, before the other window, seemed witchlike, as if ill fortune had tweaked her features.

But, and for it she applauded herself, she was able to keep perfectly calm. As she would afterward tell herself the story, when she might awake along toward morning and it would be too early to rise, "I recollected my manners and that I was a Pinkney. Julia Farrar didn't. She acted fidgety and all strung up. Sat and laughed for two hours at nothing in particular. It proves what comes from marrying out of the family."

Julia Farrar's first remark, after the long laughing spell, was rather offensive. "Why don't you speak out," she said, "and ask what I'm come for? You must be dying of curiosity. I'm sure I should be."

"I presume one always has a reason for making a seeming unseasonable call," replied Juletta, as nicely as if this were a quilting party and she and Julia Farrar snapping wet-starched strings across the frame.

"One has," snickered Julia Farrar, in a hilarious manner ill becoming her years, false teeth, and the fact that she and the other lady present were supposed to be

actively supporting a family quarrel. "I had some things bid in for me today. I came to see 'em safely disposed."

The other chair in the nearly dismantled room creaked.

"Some things bid in." Juletta knew what things. Pink saucers. She had always suspected Sabrina Perkins of being double-faced! But Julia Farrar hadn't got 'em yet, that was proved by this sneaking up between daylight and dark. Those saucers should never leave the house intact, Juletta swore it. Unless over her dead body.

What was Julia Farrar giggling about now? The Natupskis, who could be heard at their usual midnight noise. "Don't they ever quiet down?" she was asking. Juletta stopped to wonder if they ever did quiet down. She guessed they didn't.

"They're rather company," she observed, and waved a palm leaf fan.

"You must hate to think of going away and quitting 'em," said Julia Farrar, and laughed some more. Juletta might have risen and smitten her in the jaw, but she had never smitten Julia, even when they were both children, though even then Julia had been very clever at roiling the other's temper.

Night began to wane, while the two old women sat facing one another, with an occasional giggle from one, an occasional remark from the other. A soft gray took the place of blackness, and trees and the Natupski barn stood forth in that new washed, clear-cut appearance which marks a summer's dawn. This was a signal for the Natupskis to get up, if indeed they had ever been to bed. Kani came forth, wearing a milk pail upside down on his head, and carrying a few articles of clothing.

Mrs. Natupski sat on the edge of the piazza and shook the youngest baby into animation. The children bathed by rolling in the dew. At least they rolled in the dew.

"Ain't they never out o' sight?" asked Julia Farrar. "I should think you'd be tickled crazy at the idea of being shut of them."

Juletta assumed the full panoply of elder sister dignity. "Was you thinking of stopping to breakfast?" asked she. "Because, if so, I must inform you there's not a mite of china in the house."

"What?" returned Julia Farrar, with that idiotic giggle which had kept Juletta's fingers twitching all night, "not even your two pink luster sassers?"

Juletta started forward precipitately, then remembered whom she was, sat back, and tried again. This time she was able to soar upward like a balloon new-inflated in agricultural show time. "I beg your pardon, Julia Farrar. You mean your two pink luster sassers."

"Mine? Oh, not mine. I wish they were mine, for I've the cups to match. Still—there's the will, if you wish to hang on to 'em. I'm sixty-five. Sixty-five sees things different from forty. So—keep the pink luster sassers if so be it your conscience tells you to."

Juletta opened her mouth, some like a nicely disposed fish almost determined to accept the bait, and then closed it with a snap.

"I would tell the truth and shame the devil," she observed, in her delightfully exasperating, painfully polite manner.

Julia Farrar struggled to her feet, panting, because she was of stoutish habit, and unused to sitting up all night. She looked out into the green world wherein the Pinkney

place was set like a brown jewel in a jade setting. Two little nondescript birds were squabbling on one bough. They chattered and pecked one another, yet neither would fly away. There were unoccupied miles all about them, a multitude of idle twigs, yet they stayed on one bough pestering each other. What either wanted it was impossible to tell, but it was quite plain one would never go and leave the tree for the other.

Julia Farrar laughed again. She laughed until Juletta wondered if living with Hiram Farrar had left her touched. Hiram was a good man, as men went, but married life of any sort presupposed change, and change was dangerous to the mind. Juletta had felt so at twenty-six. That was why she had given Hiram up.

"Say," cried Julia Farrar, with brutal frankness, "don't let you and me be a couple of ninkums, like those dozy birds out there. I don't know what you're driving at, but this is what I want. Two pink luster sassers. You ought to be giving 'em to me this identical minute, Julet. Then I could give you the cups, and we'd stick 'em together up in the corner cupboard, where they used to be. It's what I intended when I had that man bid in the house and the barn and the land and all that was worth saving of the furniture."

For the second time in her long, self-controlled life Juletta broke down. She didn't shriek, as she had done when she found dead cats at her door, but she allowed two symmetrical tears to course over her white cheeks, as she said, "Then this is yours—and Hiram's——"

"Mine," returned Julia Farrar. "I've sold the land I got by mother's will, and it was enough to pay for the place. Quit crying, Julet. Quit, I say! Of course you

couldn't go to that old woman's almshouse in Mifflin Grove, while you have a settlement in this very room. And now—where are those pink luster sassers?"

"I'd be pleased to have you state," said Juletta, restored by a double dab from an edge of her petticoat, a handkerchief being no part of her costume because she hadn't wanted one since twenty-five years ago.

"You think I've got 'em?"

"I certainly do. I think Sabrina Perkins assisted you to their possession."

Juletta was all the more strenuous in her belief because of an overwhelming gratitude for what Julia Farrar had done in saving the home. Now, without working out the details, she felt assured of living out her days in the familiar rooms, and having the front door pried open for her remains.

"You're frank, I must say," grinned Julia Farrar, "but you're on the wrong tack. I'll be just as open-mouthed. I think you've got 'em in some hideaway place."

In their mutual passion both had drawn to the side window; Julia Farrar pettishly drumming on the sill, Juletta clasping the plug of wood that kept marauders from lifting the sash. Kani Natupski, in his morning leaps and bounds, had gone to his house, whence he was now issuing. In each hand he bore a dish, laden with repulsive brown fluid. The dishes were pink.

Julia Farrar did not giggle. "He buy anything?" she asked.

"Two dollars and sixty cents worth of trash," answered Juletta in a manner not especially stately—almost tinged with anxiety.

The birds on the bough kept on sputtering. Perhaps they enjoyed it. They sputtered all day. Their erstwhile human prototypes, united in a common horror, consulted with each other and decided to call on Abner Slocumb.

"Please go to Mr. Natupski," gasped Juletta, "and endeavor to secure the articles he took at the auction."

"Tell him we'll proceed against him by law unless he gives 'em up," said Julia Farrar. "He won't know we can't do it."

"Offer him anything he wants," continued Juletta.

"Yes. Here's a ten-dollar bill which it's lucky I had in my pocket," cried the practical Julia Farrar.

Natupski saw Slocumb approaching, while two women loitered in the Pinkney dooryard. For some reason he hauled Stanislarni from the bread barrel, thrust on him the stuffed fox, and snorted in his ear the amazing order, "Play!"

"Hei?"

"Say, Natupski, where's that truck you bought to next-door auction? It was all meant for a joke, you know—fun, just for fun. Here's two dollars and sixty cents and I'll take it all."

"Yah?" ironically. Then, back of the hand to Stanislarni, who strayed near with the fox, "Play!"

"Five dollars, Natupski, for the things. You said they wasn't no use to you."

"Oi!"

Slocumb, perturbed at the other's density, did something Nancy would never have allowed—drew out a plug and bit off a considerable chew. Then he resumed negotiations, and ran the price up to ten dollars. It was the limit; perhaps he showed that in his voice. Perhaps

Natupski needed exactly ten dollars to make up his quarter's interest.

At any rate, he thrust the bill into his pocket, collected a wheelbarrow load, which he transferred to Miss Pinkney's doorstep, after soundly belaboring Stanislarni for having too conscientiously obeyed orders, and played one of the glass eyes out of the fox's head.

So Miss Juletta became repossessed of one stuffed fox and a glass eye, several sermons in pamphlet form, two yards of rusty stovepipe, a Pub. Doc. of 1872, a number of broken clocks, a coffin-plate, a clapper without a churn, and some dozens of cracked dishes.

The last were all white.

Julia Farrar raised an angry face from the inventory and faced Juletta. Juletta was haggard.

For an awful moment each suspected the other of double-dealing. The quarrel of a quarter of a century was very near being continued to the edge of the grave. Then Natupski crossed the road and the same picture came to the memory of both.

"He did carry pink sassers, drat him!" exclaimed Julia Farrar.

"You are not incorrect in your surmise," was Juletta's comment.

In the end the cups moved to the Pinkney place, as did also Julia Farrar and her husband Hiram. Juletta lived in serene and irresponsible glory in the North chamber, passing through the entry thereto, and keeping plenty of goodies on her share of the shelves in the butt'ry.

Natupski swaggered in his mind. He had got the better of the old woman for making a fool of him;

that was all he cared. He hadn't liked it at all that the old woman flung dead cats in his face, and told him in one breath to take them away and not to take them away.

As for the pink saucers, they were very handy down in the barn cellar to hold the stuff one put on the places where the dehorned young creatures were sore. When the women had come suddenly on him, after looking at the wheelbarrow load, and shouted, "Is that all? Are you sure that's all?" he had shaken his head and batted his eye and answered, "Me not understand."

They had believed him, those fool Americans. But he knew quite well what they were after. He had lived in West Holly almost two years, and what he could have told the inhabitants about themselves would have surprised them.

V

LETTING NATUPSKI ALONE

ABNER SLOCUMB lacked determination. Every time he looked over to Natupski's he was reminded that he lacked determination. And then, too, Nancy never by any chance let him forget.

How many times had he settled on terms of implacable animosity to his Polish fellow-farmer, only to be turned away by something that seemed pretty serious to an American—such as the uprooted berry bush or the martyred hay-cutter—but about which the Polish agriculturalist would allow no interference. How many trips had he made to the Natupski barn with information as to the market for potatoes, a sure cure for botts on horses, or the weather man's prophesy of storm signals tomorrow, get your hay in this afternoon, only to have his well-meant advice flung in his teeth. Then would Abner Slocumb darn all interlopers of non-English-tongued varieties, and resume scorn and derision as a couple of upper garments.

And still Abner could never quite content his social soul with emulating the unneighborly frigidity that existed always on the Pinkney side of the Natupski farm.

"They say," observed Abner the January following the famous Pinkney auction, "that you have to summer

and winter folks to know 'em. Done both twice and a half to Natupski and by Godfrey Mighty he gets harder to guess right along."

"Give him up," returned Mrs. Slocumb in her thinnest lip manner.

"Wise counsel," laughed her husband, "and you've taken it yourself, as all counselors don't. I keep aiming to do the same, too, but the critter makes so much noise when he tries to get quietly out of fixes that I don't succeed particular well. Hear considerable of a towse this afternoon?"

Nancy nodded.

"He'd got that new horse wedged in between the wall and a stone boat, and 'cause the creature couldn't move he was whipping it to make it move. I stood it a spell, then went and made him lay down the whip and unbuckle the harness. The horse stepped out, sort o' shivery, and looking back said plain enough, 'Glad I'm shut o' that!' You know how a horse can speak, with great rolling eyes. You'd thought that Polish scrimp would 'a' felt some pleasure at the way the noble creature stood stock-still, not offering to move, but no. The brute—Natupski—picked up the whip and commenced lashing again, 's if the horse was to blame all through. By the way, Nance, where was you?"

She laughed in the self-taunting manner she assumed when "acting foolish."

"Oh, to Natupski's, 'course. If you had him in the ten-acre lot, I had all the rest in that kitchen bedroom Mrs. Judson Buckland said was too small for a sewing-machine and a dressmaker to oncet. Two or three's got croup. I looked across and see 'em gasping through all the win-

dow grime. Remembered my goose grease and slipped over with it and flannel."

Both lay on the table, whither Mr. Slocumb sent an inquiring glance.

"We never had any children, thank the Lord!" she burst out. "But common sense and observation have taught me the way to bring 'em up. Feedings at regular times, a proper formula, with a teaspoonful of water or six drops of orange juice if necessary. The second year scraped beef and educators. In case of a choking spell a kettle of hot water under a sheet tent, with liberal application of lard or goose grease to the chest. 'Tain't no way to fight it to tie a charm round the young one's neck and then sit on the floor and wail."

She swept the rejected medicaments into the chimney cupboard.

"Polish babies, being nourished on germs, at irregular intervals of from fifteen minutes up to half a day, may have their croups different," she snorted.

Perhaps Nancy Slocumb was right; at any rate, Wajeiceh, 'Statia, and the new baby, whose name was getting gradually changed from Marinki to Marinka, recovered from this spell of sickness with a celerity that spoke well for their constitutions.

The few American babies in West Holly, pursued with wet sponges, hygiene, and sterilized linen, had the rickets, didn't weigh what they ought for their age, sometimes died. Natupski kept his family intact, with several gratifying incretions. Kazia followed Marinka and Novia put Kazia's nose out of joint. This was giving 'Statia a good many little sisters, but Kani was too busy getting a man's work out of Stanislarni to voice many com-

plaints. This one born in Poland was proving a husky delight to his father. Even before he stopped beating him with the goad, Kani never looked at his oldest son without a great feeling of thankfulness that the boy had not been wasted on Poland. He shivered sometimes when he reflected on his narrow escape from a total missing of this fine young hired man who was his to command until of age.

Stanislarni was about ten when his father stopped beating him. Stanislarni convinced his father that he could do more work when not exhausted by a licking, and—wonderful to relate—Kani Natupski believed it, though only so far as Stanislarni was concerned. He kept on pounding Wajeiceh and threatening the girls if they did not work to suit him.

Nine years after his arrival in West Holly two more boys had come to prove Mrs. Natupski's assertion that, given time, she could provide her husband with plenty of both kinds. Stepan was the elder, and the advent of Tadcuse might have been celebrated simultaneously with the last payment to Mrs. Buckland, only the payment left nothing to celebrate with. For about then her piebald horse, now tottery on the legs, made a last trip to the house over the way from the barn he was born in. The best of the crops and the cream of the profits could no longer be claimed by the lady who drove him.

Owing to the fact that Nancy Slocumb had been snubbed when she advised oiling Stepan at three weeks, since he seemed a tendsome child, she had been two years trying to copy the Pinkney plan. Abner helped her because she made him. They did pretty well in turning

their backs on the house next door and resolutely using the rooms and looking from the windows on the opposite side. Hence they were amazed one fine morning to see Natupski slouching up their walk, in his hand a torn slip of paper which he tendered in silence to Abner.

"What's this? A mortgage note and canceled. What d'ye show it to me for?"

Natupski shook his head in pure bewilderment.

"Me paid M's Buckland," he murmured, in a puzzled manner, evidently thinking this a mysterious call for more moneys.

Slocumb of course abandoned his rôle of non-interference in a self-forgetful rejoicing that his little neighbor was out of debt. He never expected to reach that halcyon state himself, but then—he had not to suffer Mrs. Judson Buckland as a creditor.

He snatched the paper and lit it with the match he applied to his pipe.

"'Rah for you," he shouted and explained himself. "Now you're rich, Natupski. All this is yourn!"

He swept a half-circle with his thumb, the horizon one limit, his own domain another. It was indeed a sparkling prospect for a man who had once lived in Poland envying landowners. The soil peeping up between crops of Natupski's planting was black with fertilizer, fine as sand from much working over, and always weedless. In Natupski's barnyard a fine herd of cows gathered nightly, for Kani had learned by experience how to care for his creatures. Splendid fowls stalked about, making one forget the featherless chicks that had been buried by the hundred in the first two years of Natupski's farming.

His house looked just as when he moved in, with nine years' accretion of dirt; but the barn had been efficiently patched with new boards, plastered with dung, and shingled with cedar shingles at an extravagant price per thousand.

But Natupski, despite all these reasons for gloating, shook his head gloomily.

"Nie. Me poor. Me poorest man in all world. Me got no hope."

"Shucks! You got a whole lot little hopes. Besides one big one—Stanislarni. That chap's so darn cute not one of the neighbors ever manages to get a glimpse of those left-hand fingers was nipped off in my hay-cutter."

The small man, whose boyish grace was already turning to a wizened agility, would not rise to the bait. Something troubled him so that he was not willing to brag of his big boy. He leaned against the post and groaned.

They were on the stoop, where Nancy tried to banish her husband the warm half of the year. It was her ideal to get the inside of the house immaculate and then go outside and live. But whose ideal is achieved? Certainly not Nancy Slocumb's. The line storm or the minister to tea were always interfering. But today they were on the stoop and when she looked at Natupski's shoes she was glad.

Natupski spoke next with bitter emphasis. "Me not going to stay on farm."

"Heavenly Betsey!" shrilled Nancy from her place in the background, where she was stringing beans. "Looking to sell?" Her mind rapidly sought the chances for neighborhood improvement, and found none.

"What next?" she asked herself, and answered, "Hungarians, I s'pose."

The Polander was shaking his head as he said, "Me go 'way. Jus' go 'way."

"I see," drawled Slocumb. "Think you'll treat yourself to a vacation, now you're shut of the mortgage."

"Me go other land."

"Back to the old country, where you were raised? Take any of 'em with you?"

"Me go 'lone, all 'lone," crooned the little Polander, falling at a straight-backed chair and trying to rock in it.

"What—not even your wife? Well, I s'pose you want her to look after the farm——"

"No good!" he exploded with great force. "She not know how to tend farm. Not know how to tend children. Me go nights cover up little boys. Me say who cover up little boys next year."

"Wal—'Statia's getting a sizable girl," Slocumb tried to say, but the broken speech went on, "Wife need me. Children need me. Stay five year, then go. Not so bad."

"Then why not stick to it that spell?" Slocumb suggested.

"Me sorry," Natupski continued, in doleful singsong.

"Me awful sorry. That why."

"Reason and a half," derided Slocumb. "You're sorry you got to go, and you got to go 'cause you're sorry——"

Natupski stamped his foot.

"Me awful sorry—sorry here!" He put his hands on the place where the khaki of his trousers met the

black of his shirt. And then, "Me sorry here, too," and spread his stumpy fingers on his throat.

The Slocumbs, dimly discerning what he would be at, sat gazing, then rallied.

"I see. You're under the weather. Sick?"

"Me sorry. Yes. Me no care for farm. No care nothing."

"Have a doctor," snarled Nancy, the more viciously because softened into sympathy a few moments before.

"Me did."

"Dr. Gibson?"

"Ump."

"What'd he say?"

"Doctor feel me all over. Doctor say no nothing matter. Me say you damn fool."

The affair of the doctor being thus suddenly closed, Slocumb, after blinking, observed, "But see here, Natupski, don't you want to get well?"

"Sure. All folks want get well. But don't get well. Hospital full folks want get well. But don't get well. Tell me how get well me give farm. Give Stanislarni. Give all children. Give wife——"

"Sh!" warned Nancy, rising and shaking nothing off her gingham apron. "I don't believe you're half's sick's he was last year. Can you eat an aig?"

Yes, Natupski could do that.

"Well, he couldn't."

"Not one egg? Jus' one egg?"

"No. Couldn't down it. Had to have the white set off 'n' frothed up. Now——"

"I can manage the cow and the calf and all the rest o' the rhymed version," put in Slocumb.

Natupski ran a bleared eye over the Slocumb form, muscular and strong.

"And I sleep——" Slocumb went on, when Natupski interrupted.

"Me no sleep. Me cry. Wife cry. Children cry. No sleep."

"He couldn't, till I got him outdoors. Ever sleep outdoors?"

"Nie!" Then, brightening up, "Me smash rest o' window."

Nancy sat down hard at that and remained until the visitor was gone, after demonstrating, by a considerable thumping of breast and stomach, the places where he was not "sorry," implying disease in all other parts of his anatomy.

Then she made a long step to the 'phone and asked Central to give her Dr. Gibson. Every receiver was down on the line, she knew that, but those listening for salacious symptoms heard only, "Say, Doctor, why didn't you do something for that sick Polander on the Judson Buckland place? He's able to pay full price now, you know."

"I'm aware of the fact," returned the doctor, "but what's the use?"

"You set me watching Abner last year. Why not let Natupski's wife cure him?"

"Being what she is, she won't. Not one of 'em 'll take care of another that's sick. They sit round and wait."

"But what's the matter of him?"

She listened with all heed during the ensuing pause and nodded at the answer she expected, "Starvation."

"You see," she was yelling ten minutes later to Mrs. Natupski (forcibly waylaid between duties such as nursing the baby and pitching hay), "he can't get well without nourishing food. Oh, dear, I don't s'pose she senses a word I'm saying. These, there," pointing to a pair of pullets, and going through a dumb show of fricasseeing. "And aigs. Lots of aigs. Milk, too." She imbibed a couple of quarts from her own fist. "Come here, 'Statia," seizing on the girl who was fetching baby Tadcuse to the maternal fount. "Tell your ma——" she repeated her words and heard them turned into excitable Polish.

Mrs. Natupski rejected the idea with vigorous gestures.

"Says," volunteered 'Statia, "papa no will let."

"I presume," returned Nancy, "he counts every aig and knows how many hens there be."

She meant this for sarcasm, and felt like bursting into sympathetic tears when the little girl replied that it was really so. Mrs. Slocumb had known New Englanders who were "near," but their wives had won unmoral victories by holding out a pound of butter to a churning, a chick to a brood. After all, life must be pretty hard as a Natupski.

She laid a kindly arm on the other woman's shoulder, and then turned home.

"She told me," 'Statia put in Polish, "she will bring back nice things for papa."

The Natupskis had been tempted with very few gifts from their scornful neighbors, but Mrs. Natupski smiled in Nancy's face over the basket containing the yellow-legged fowl, the dozen eggs, the jar of cream, though she did force acceptance of a square of vari-hued Polish

embroidery in return. Nancy regarded the gaudy bit in questioning amazement. "Don't know what to do with it any more'n a cat knows how to wag two tails," she observed, as she locked it into a drawer where she kept all the "too good" things, as mother's last set of false teeth and Mr. Slocumb's stepfather's first wife's marriage certificate.

A fortnight passed, during which Kani absorbed as much cream and as many guaranteed eggs as the best sanitarium could have induced the most obstinate of "lungers" to put away. He had been benefited after the surreptitious manner recommended to wives of dipsomaniacs, for Mrs. Natupski was unexpectedly clever in chicanery. The chickens could not, to be sure, be "administered secretly in a cup of coffee," but he had picked many bones without comment after being told a story, entirely fiction, concerning an unfortunate biddy that flew against the grindstone and was picked up dead.

The end, however, did not justify the means. Kani was no better. He coughed in the night, and roused the family at unholy hours to join him in praying for saintly interposition. The third donation was accepted, but gloomily. Nancy was almost determined to call up Dr. Gibson and tell him his diagnosis was wrong. While she sat considering, and at the same time mending a sock and holding the cat, a usual day had an unusual ending next door.

Mrs. Natupski, having done four hours' work before breakfast, swallowed a few unsavory morsels, and then beat the children all round, this being her method to insure their willingness that she should depart to the

field. As it was haying time she did her full share of loading, raking after, even mowing away. 'Statia staggered about the untidy yard, weighted by fat young Tad-cuse, and keeping an eye on the creeping Stepan and the waddling Novia. Kazia and 'Rinka had been sent to glean raspberries from the Slocumb canes. 'Statia did not forget to put the fowl to boil, as Mrs. Slocumb had advised, and, there being no sale in West Holly for green peas, the meal was indeed almost American to which the Natupskis sat down at sunset, mamma having worked so late that in hastening to the baby she had time to bestow but a single kick on the passing horse. It was her usual fashion to be more liberal in wanton tyranny, which was simply a handing on of her husband's former manifestations toward her in the happy days when he possessed health and strength and was sustained in energy by the fearful anticipation of Mrs. Buckland's quarterly calls.

Mamma was so busy simultaneously satisfying the hunger of the baby and her own appetite that not until the second leg was pulled from the fowl did she notice papa. She saw he was eating in a way that reminded her of her bridegroom Kani tearing the black bread at their first meal together in Poland. A wing followed the leg, and half the breast disappeared in two gulps. With this meat he drank six cups of the boiled chicory which had been doctored with eggs and cream at noon, and left for 'Statia to warm up. Finally he reached across the board, abruptly removed the plate from under 'Statia's nose and shoveled the food into his mouth with two sweeps of a knife.

The girl, who had lost time by trying to eat nice, with

a fork, put up a lip, but there was no little girl crying done in Natupski's house that day.

Papa rose, stretched his arms, lowered his head like an infuriated beast, and from under his brows looked his wife in the face.

“*Labial!*” he roared. Then he leaped over his chair, and made a passing kick at the only unbroken pitcher on the premises. In a moment more he had Mrs. Natupski by the arm and was administering resounding slaps to the side of her head—such slaps as one might give an obstinate ox if one was cruel. Nor did this end the episode. The goad was on the piazza, and after being shouted at several times Wajeiceh, trembling, brought it to papa, who forthwith lashed mamma stingingly.

This scene Mr. and Mrs. Slocumb interrupted. They had never, in all their nine years of living next door, ventured to actually call on the Natupskis, but “Come on,” said Abner, “let’s give the cuss one more chance to treat us like men and brothers. He’s under the weather and we owe him kindness on that account, anyhow.”

They took one look of frenzied horror at the scene, then dragged one another home with curdling blood. Nancy was hysterical for the first time in her life.

“That poor, poor woman! Toiling all day—and a nursing baby—and eating crusts while he has the fat of the land——”

“A dumb brute,” said her husband, “only I’m mortified to insult the critters by comparing him to ’em——”

“And to think”—Nancy choked—“that I and I alone am to blame. Forcing nutritious food on her for him so she may become a victim of abuse. She’ll always hate me

now, and no wonder. Abner, we must make a vow never——”

“I mean always——” he interrupted.

“Never to interfere with the Natupskis,” she screamed.

“Always to let the Natupskis alone,” he roared.

Enter Mrs. Natupski, bruised, even bleeding, but voluble.

“*Zbawiciel!*” she shouts, and having shown her gratitude by addressing these gaunt New Englanders as saviors and redeemers, adds that thanks to them she has her husband back as he was in the honeymoon—
“*Pierwscy, miesiac po slubie!*”

And falls down and worships, much to the embarrassment of her neighbors.

VI

“HI-JINKS” IN WEST HOLLY

“WHAT’s he got?” asked Mrs. Nancy Slocumb, holding her needle at the full thread’s length from the stocking whose thinnest part was stretched over a well-rounded sea-shell. She was mending hose, as usual, before the holes broke, while Abner read a letter they had just received from a nephew in Boston.

A few weeks had passed since Mrs. Natupski’s horrifying exhibition of gratitude, but the Slocumbs could not forget.

As usual, after a falling out of understanding between the two nationalities, the border line was strictly observed, and all communication reduced to mere civilities.

The Slocumbs had retired to that sitting-room which looked “the other way” when Nancy said, “What’s he got?” and “N-e-u-r-r-th-nic,” said Abner, shooting out the final sentence as if afraid it might stick in his system and clog the works.

“What’s that?”

“It’s what he’s got,” was Abner’s best offer.

“Don’t try to be funny with me. If you can’t tell, say so right out.” Nancy was as encouraging as a school-teacher dealing with a boy whom one is desirous of trapping after school.

“I think,” said Abner, “it’s a disease. The letter goes on to say the doctor tells him he’s worked too hard and

he must go to a place where there's absolutely nothing to do. So he's coming here next Saturday."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Nancy, her mind rapidly filming all the carpets that must be up and down, and all the cooking that must be done, before she would be ready to welcome young Arthur, now fifteen, and by her unseen since he was in short pants.

Abner had at last found chuckling food and was shaking gleefully. "What I like," he gurgled, "is his coming here because there's absolutely nothing to do. Rowen to cut, oats to cradle, apples to pick, fodder corn to save, and that ball-faced cow liable to come in any day! If I did all I ought to do every twenty-four hours I'd overtake myself on the way up to bed."

When the boy arrived Nancy was not slow in finding out what neurasthenic was and pleased to learn that Abner was partly wrong. It was not a disease, certainly not; just a state of the system. As for the work, that was what study was called nowadays.

Abner reminded himself of his boyhood, when lads considered winter school a neat sitting-down job, welcome after eight months' wrestling with planting, cultivating, and reaping. How almost incredible it seemed that one of his blood should hold it a task to read books. Abner rather flaunted his own practical prowess as he drove the hired man to the ten-acre piece. Nancy thought it a good thing if having the boy around was going to make her easy-going husband take that course.

But no sooner did Arthur get wonted to life in West Holly than he wanted to go home. Actually packed his little valise and deposited it in the sitting-room, with the

remark that the nearest train was the 4:30, and he didn't mind walking if uncle needed the horse.

Uncle remonstrated.

"Land o' Goshen," he said, "I don't favor this a-tall. Lotted on your staying till sweet apple time. Wanted to see you get some color in your face and fat onto your ribs. Don't you like it here with us?"

"Y-yes. You and aunt are awful kind," stammered the boy. "But—you see I want something to do."

Abner shook his head and wondered what we were coming to.

He had heard a great deal about the fatal fascination of city life, and here was a mere boy an example of longing for vaudeville and passing crowds.

It seemed a case for feminine cajolement. Nancy was called.

"Say, Arthur's thinking he wants to go home-along. Thinks it's too tarnation dull on a farm. I want you to tell him haying 'll be over pretty soon, and then we'll try and lay ourselves out more in the way of entertaining."

"Surely," said Nancy. "There'll be Sunday-school picnic for one thing, and cattle shows start around August."

"H'm, h'm," nodded Abner, in approval. Then he added, "And you 'n' she can take the hoss any afternoon and go a-cousining."

"Oh, you haven't understood," interrupted Arthur, blushing pitifully. He was a nice boy, and really distressed because his uncle and aunt thought him ungrateful. "You mustn't trouble to take me about. It's only——"

"You mustn't leave," said Abner, "till you've had more of your aunt's cooking. Why, Arthur, garden sass is hardly begun to come yet. And there won't be chickens broiling-size before next week."

"I was planning roast sucking-pig for Sunday dinner," interpolated Nancy, "and if you're sick of pie-plant pies and strawberry shortcake, which I admit we have had pretty regular because just now's between hay and grass for pie-filling——"

"Apples being out, and blueb'rys not yet turned," Abner put in, intelligently.

"Why, I'll send to the store for raisins and citron and stir up a batch of fruit-cake. I'd just love to do it."

"And I'd just love to eat some on't," said her gallant husband, smacking his lips. "So would you, Arthur, if you once got your teeth into it. Your Aunt Nancy don't pattern by any woman when it comes to makin' cake——"

"And you mustn't think you've wore your welcome out," she was saying. "I admit I was some sca't when Abner said you was a-coming. You see, I ain't much used to boys, and I s'posed you'd hector the cat, 'n' track in mud, and throw things round upstairs till the spare chamber looked 'bout ready to ride out. From what I rec'lect o' my brothers that was the only sort o' boy there was. But you're not like that, Arthur. I must say your ma or somebody has trained you splendid. The cat's never so happy as when you're a-making of her, and I never did see anything quite so cute as the hangers you've fixed for the clothes press with old wire and a broom handle."

Arthur had to do something to stop them talking, so

he burst into tears—he was only fifteen, remember, and suffering from neurasthenia—and sobbed out he was quite happy at West Holly—didn't want to go out nights—could be contented for weeks lying in the hammock reading "Japhet in Search of a Father" and the other products of the bookcase—but that he felt his precious time was being wasted.

"When I say there's nothing to do," he added, polishing himself off with a handkerchief fresh from the folds, "I mean there's nobody to do anything for."

Abner's jaw dropped. A boy, only fifteen, complaining there was nobody to do anything for! As he recalled it, Abner's own youth loomed up a period entirely occupied with devising schemes to get out of doing things for folks. All the boys were similarly employed in escaping woodboxes that must be filled, carpets that must be beaten, grandfathers who must be run errands for.

"What particular line of thing was you planning to do for somebody, when you get back to the city?" asked Abner, adding, "Of course it's right down good of you to consider your ma so much, though she writes she's managing to make out."

Arthur stared.

"I don't help mother," he observed. "We have different lines. She's in Civic Improvement—clean-up day, you see, and all that. Most of the fellows' mothers are, now. Municipal housekeeping it is called. But I'm worried about my club—my own special club."

Abner and Nancy stood silent, talked out. The boy went on, "I organized it all myself, though it meets at the West End Settlement House. I began with five and

now from twenty-five to thirty come every evening. They are splendid chaps and getting a fine tone; they agreed to take turns being director while I was away, and the scribe was going to write me all that happened. Then I thought maybe I could organize something like it out here—a corresponding branch. But all the boys I've met in West Holly are home from Academy and ahead of me in things. So I think I'd better go back, where I can really do some good, and not spend the whole summer just amusing myself. I'm too mature, you know, for anything like that."

Abner suddenly sat down and began to roar.

"Ho-ho-ho!" he laughed. "So that's what's eating you? The grub's all right and the place's all right, but you want some submerged tenth to do a little good to. Have I guessed right?"

Arthur nodded, though it touched a raw spot to have his "work" thus ridiculed. Perhaps Abner saw, for he presently stopped laughing and put a few questions.

"Serious, now, boy, tell me about it. Who are this twenty-thirty and what d'ye do to 'em?"

"Well, they are mostly newsboys. Russian Jews. And oh, so eager to learn things. Why, when it came to naming the club one boy suggested 'West End Society' and the rest all said no. They didn't expect to live in the West End all their lives, they said; they would go to better places when they were men and earning money, but they should always keep the club going, so they wanted a name they never need change."

"Well, what's it called?" asked Nancy.

"The Oliver Wendell Holmes Guild."

"I suppose that's your notion?" Abner gasped.

"Oh, no. Every suggestion has to come from a member. I'd never have got along with them at all only by letting the boys run things."

"Then what's the use of you?" Abner inquired, puzzled. "Why couldn't they have made up a club all alone?"

Arther couldn't tell, only they didn't. He was director. All the clubs in the settlements had directors. It was the director's business to keep out of everything and yet be in it all.

"You see, I gave 'em little talks," he remarked, with firm modesty. "I was always ready and studied up, but I didn't say anything until they asked. And then I brought round other boys, who told 'em things they wanted to know. Things I wasn't up in. Once I was ready to run away, when they insisted I should explain Football Signals. You see I never have time for athletics. But I got our school captain of the Eleven to come up and he was perfectly splendid. He put on his spiked shoes and other togs downstairs, and then I got a pan of mud and mussed him and he wore his nose-guard the entire evening. My, the club was pleased, and I was solid with them after that."

"Arthur," exclaimed his uncle, "I beg your pardon!"

"What?"

"I'm afraid I been thinking you was sort of a molly-coddle; your aunt said you was good as a niece round the kitchen, and I was afraid you'd grow up and be something sissy, like a gent schoolmarm. Now I know better. I'll bet your aunt anything she pleases to name that you're cut out for a circus man."

"Oh, don't!" grinned Arthur. "I really did help

those kids. And you should have seen the treat they insisted on giving me before I came out here. They said I'd been doing things for them all winter, so now I must be their guest. And they took me to an amusement park, and I had to eat peanuts and drink sarsaparilla and ride flying horses, while those splendid little chaps, who have to sell four papers to earn a single penny, paid the nickels. I tell you, uncle, I never expect to swallow such soda water again. They just stood round in a circle and looked happy while I drank alone."

"The little tykes!" said Abner, while Nancy flirted her apron into her eyes and wondered what such a club would do with half a barrel of Early Astrachans.

"Put most of 'em in their pockets to carry home to the littler kids," said Arthur. "They're always doing that. Try it with ice-cream and greasy drumsticks at the big Christmas dinners. But it's getting awfully late, uncle. I've not much time to spare if I catch the 4:30."

"Take that valise right up chamber," responded Abner. "I won't have any nephew o' mine going back to the city complaining the rooral deestriacts is short of anything. We got a sample of about everything that's going right here in West Holly."

"Oh, uncle, not slums!"

"What is slums?" asked Abner, settling back in his chair with an ease that augured ill for what hay was out, since if the hired man was not asleep under a birch sapling, then it was because he was smoking his pipe under the pines.

"Oh—you know. Dirty houses, old, and never built to be used for what they are used now. And the people don't know how to live clean, besides many of them are

new to America, so they can't understand what is best."

"Boy," remarked Abner, "if your description's c'rect, and I reckon 'tis, we've got as good slums as any one could want right hereabout. Oh, yes. As dirty a house as one need hanker after—old, never intended to be used as 'tis used; people who don't know the first thing about living clean; and so new to America that they——"

"Haven't a fly-screen, a wash-rag, or a door that'll shut on the premises," quoth Nancy, catching her husband's drift.

"You've said it. Now, Arthur, that high-named club might have been very well for a starter, but there's a tougher job cut out for you here in West Holly. We're going to let you tackle the Natupskis!"

"What are they?" stammered the boy, and having a confused remembrance of being already introduced to a lot of objects with similarly confusing names—Holsteins, Berkshires, Minorcas.

"What are they? Hard to tell. When the young ones take vermin into school we call 'em pests; 'n' again when the man reclaims a old barren pasture and makes it feed fifteen creatures where before three starved, I say they're precepts and examples. Anyway, they're your meat. Come from Poland, don't know the first thing about American ways, and don't want to know. I tackled the man, and was called a murderer for my pains; your aunt set out to be good to the woman, and got the poor thing a beating. I design you should get after the children."

Arthur appeared bewildered, but he saw plainly enough his uncle was making fun of that Oliver Wendell Holmes Guild.

"He thinks I'm a silly kid," the boy reflected. "Well, I did help those newsboys—I did so! Let him bring on his old country slum." And aloud he asked mildly how many young people were supposed to await "tackling."

"There's a snarl of 'em," said Nancy.

"He'd better take the ones already broke in to school," observed Abner. "Stanis, the biggest boy, is turned thirteen, I should say."

"And 'Statia," put in Nancy. "She's ten and bright's a button, if some one'd only tell her what for."

"Not girls," Arthur murmured. "I couldn't tell a girl anything."

"All right. It's completely your funeral," was Abner's lugubrious comment, as he finally rose to look after the hay. "You better start in straight off, Mr. Eleemosynary Hardworker. You'll probably find your congregation out stealing something off'n my farm."

Arthur set his jaw and explored the premises. There was a shed the upper part of which would make a good enough meeting place. It was approached by a trap-door, which was splendid in itself; and the bare floor was only encumbered by shavings from stray carpentry. Arthur swept vigorously, and borrowed some old chairs from the garret, also a sort of rocking-bench that he could not know was a chair cradle. On a light stand he placed the splendid gavel he found in the cellar (it was a bung starter) and over the wide window he draped the felt banners of his school. He was glad he had brought them. It would have seemed wrong to start a club without felt banners. Arthur decided it looked good enough, and went to find his Natupskis. On the way he meditated anent his first talk.

Oh—“The Toothbrush.”

After that, “Hygiene of Hair and Nails,” “Fresh Air in the Sleeping-Room,” “Mastication of Food,” culminating in “The Daily Bath.” Arthur had been trained in that large school which endeavors to secure moral regeneration through sanitation.

Being an adept in catching boys he had no trouble in securing the presence of two young male Natupskis at his first evening session, which began with sunset and continued under the bright light of Aunt Nancy’s well-polished lantern.

Looking the lads over some understanding of their loneliness thrilled Arthur’s little practical heart.

Arthur no longer remembered that he wanted to “make good” as a means of getting back at Uncle Abner. He really yearned to give these waifs some present happiness. He began to talk more eloquently than he had ever talked at the Oliver Wendell Holmes Guild.

His subject was that other club in the West End of Boston. From it he passed to the subject of himself. He had come to West Holly, he said, and he was lonesome.

“Let’s meet here—every night, if you like. Perhaps not quite so often? You are to say what we are to do. We will take turns being in charge.”

Stanislarni nodded a very shock head. The younger boy stared.

“We will do things together. Things we like to do,” Arthur went on, rather nervously. His city newsboys had not received him in silence such as this, they had been

forever bobbing up and waving their hands for recognition. "Er—games, for instance."

It was hurrying things to produce these so early in the evening, for he had depended on dominoes and tiddly-winks to sugarcoat a half-hour's instruction. But the constant gaze of four ox-like eyes had effect in putting the young missionary out of his reckoning.

Not a boy looked at the enticing table. Even when Arthur stooped to get the checkerboard from under a chair, he could feel the top of his head being bored by a piercing gaze.

As a gambler who plays his last penny "Go Bang" was added to the pieces on the board. Arthur sank back exhausted and waited.

The place grew full of those dreadful sounds that ring in the ears of those who suffer from stage fright. Stanisłarni slowly uncrossed his right foot and crossed his left. Wajeiceh wetted his lips. The table gave an independent creak. The wind in the trees sounded like a rainy day. Arthur was afraid that if he tried to speak he would find he had lost his voice. What was his topic for the evening?

"The Toothbrush."

At the O. W. H. Guild it had been bad form to introduce it abruptly. One worked up to it with tact. How did one begin?

"Let us tell a story—let us each tell a story. Benny Levi, will you not begin? Tell us the first thing you remember."

Benny tells a tale, probably apochryphal, about going to Heder.

"That is very nice. Now I am going to tell you what

I first remember. I suppose you will all laugh. The first thing I remember is having a toothache."

Obedient laughter accompanied by much falling off chairs.

"Well, boys, I've never forgotten that toothache. Have any of you had the toothache? Then I'm sure you'll never forget it. Now we none of us like to have toothache. Do we like to have toothache? 'Course we don't. And the only way not to have it is to brush our teeth every time we eat anything."

Due pause for hilarity, then continuance: "Oh, it's all right to laugh, but those of us who have had the toothache know it was no laughing matter. Perhaps we had to go to the dentist and have it pulled out. Just think, that tooth will never grow again!"

Pause for consternation. Next, "I, for one, have made up my mind to always brush my teeth, and so not have any of them pulled out. I'm going to brush them up and down, because the dentist says that is the correct way. And I am going to take lots of care of my toothbrush and keep it in a wax-paper case, like this. Would any of you boys like to try it, with me? We might agree to brush our teeth three times a day for a week, and to report if we forgot. Mr. Sparrow, the kind man who built this house, sent up all these nice, sealed-up brushes, and if any one wants to take one he may. They are not gifts, they are only loaned. I'm sure he would like every boy here to borrow one and keep it for a while. Then bring it back, and let him know if you are not glad. And he will have a new brush and a tube of paste for every one who hasn't forgotten."

That clever sop to self-respect, loaning the toothbrush,

seemed to all the settlement workers the top-notch of delicacy. "I've fifty-five brushes lent out," they would brag to one another.

Arthur felt that he must make a break. He opened his mouth to start the toothbrush peroration, when an immense bump on the underside of the trap-door saved the evening. Stanislarni, who was sitting over it, jerked out a very American "Ow!" Wajeiceh growled "What's matter?" and looked pugnaciously at Arthur. Stanislarni recovered first and grinned, after cuffing his brother.

"Bet yer," he said, "my sister 'Statia. She mad."

Another bump lifted the trap. The boy looked for instructions.

"Give a lick?" he asked.

"Why, of course not," said Arthur, naturally distressed at this manner of dealing with the female sex. He advanced to parley. Pert little 'Statia, her black hair adorned with cobwebs, a result of butting that wooden trap, peered eagerly around the forbidden place.

"Lemme in," she said, peremptory as a militant at the door of Parliament. "I got more English than any of 'em. I can talk awful good. Teacher telled me so."

"B-but this is a boys' club. Just for boys, you know," explained the afflicted Arthur. Stanislarni, catching his drift, showed that his former silence had been the result of choice, by exuding a mass of Polish talk which Arthur hoped was less abusive than it sounded.

"A'right," said 'Statia, at the finish. "Go ahead. I sit here."

She plumped herself on the top step, politely out of the room, practically in it.

Arthur felt the impossibility of letting her brothers

bang the trap down on her head, and restrained their desire to do so. He got back to his chair, and began the toothbrush patter, hardly knowing what he said.

"Let us tell a story—let us each tell a story. Stanislarni Natupski, will you not begin? Tell us the first thing you remember."

As he feared, no giggles, no apochrypha, no anything. Stanislarni sat as if made out of wood. It was quite dreadful. Arthur lacked inventive power, he could see no way of dashing into the toothbrush lecture but by the well-learned path.

A voice, from the stairs, broke his reverie.

"Ask me, mister. Don't ask them greenhorns."

He asked her.

"First I remember is Stanislarni has a banana. Some nice rich person is give him a banana. He bites with the skin on and it is bad. Stanislarni is a awful greenhorn."

Having thus neatly scored off her customarily tyrannical brother, 'Statia folds her hands over her inadequate seersucker skirt and beams.

Arthur goes on. He repeats the story of his own toothache. When he pauses for laughter, it is 'Statia who laughs. When he stops for consternation over the tooth that will never grow again it is the intelligent female who interpolates, "Second tooth." Even the brisk-witted Russian Jews hadn't thought of that. But at the invitation to borrow a toothbrush, which Arthur illustrated by the production of a half-dozen, properly sealed (he never left home without them), it was the masculine element that abruptly arose.

"No good a club," said Stanislarni. "Teeths. Dam'!

I want George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Mister Thaddeous Roosevelt. Teeths! Dam'!"

Followed by his subservient brother he clattered down the stairs, not in the least minding that he walked all over 'Statia. Indeed, she was upstairs before they were down.

"Don't yer care," she grinned. "You lemme take one them brushes and I'll use it good on all the small kids. They's too little to kick."

Arthur essayed to append something of the doctrine concerning individuality in toilet matters, but she refused to listen. Pocketing the wax-paper packet neatly by putting it down her neck—as the heroine does all incriminating documents in the melodrama—she meandered about, touching everything and approving generally.

"These chairs is nice. Slocumbs', ain't they? Do they stay out here always?" Then, seeing the games, "What for?"

Arthur endeavored to explain. She recognized dominoes, but the beautiful Go Bang board appealed most heartily.

At nine o'clock, when Abner Slocumb crept out to see how the experiment was resulting, he found a dirty little girl and a pale-faced youth playing their seventh game of Go Bang by the waning flame of the lantern.

"Light her 'long the road a piece," said Abner, but 'Statia didn't need such attention. She ran off gaily, yelling, "Sure I come tomorrow. And bring them green-horns."

"Wal, you made a good start?" asked Abner.

Arthur didn't know. He might have thought he had—because, as his uncle reminded him, a girl was as well

worth saving as a boy, but her next-to-farewell request had been very disquieting.

"I s'pose you couldn't, please, mister, gimme a chew?"

It was perfectly evident that Arthur had a good summer's work cut out for him in West Holly.

II

True to her promise, 'Statia appeared the next evening holding two younger brothers by the ear. One was only Stepan, not yet four, but his sister answered for him as eligible to any masculine society, since, if any one would give him a cigarette, he would smoke it and swallow the butt just as skilfully as she could do it herself.

"Here, you, mister, they wants to wash their teeth. They wants to wash their teeth all the time. Shut up, Stepan! Ain't I a-telling you? Don't you go putting your talk in. Oh, mister, I 'most killed our baby. He ain't got washing size teeths, but I didn't think."

"Say," said Uncle Abner, who exercised a general oversight in the evening sessions for which he bought kerosene and Nancy baked gingersnaps, "why don't the biggest boy come round?" And "He went off mad," said Arthur, "saying something about Roosevelt and Washington. Of course I'm not stuck on myself to that extent. I couldn't keep school."

Abner reflected. "I sh'd judge," he remarked, "that Oliver Wendell Holmes business was just a sort of washing-machine."

His words had effect. Arthur burrowed in the old bookcase and disinterred Edison's comprehensive encyclopedia. It was rather disgusting that he, a well-

educated American boy, didn't feel equal to telling Stanislarni Natupski about the Father of his Country. But wood-carving, botany, and laboratory work did take such a lot of time!

He sent a polite message, which he hoped was properly delivered, to Stanislarni, announcing the immortal Washington as a topic, and the thirteen-year-old condescended to come and shove his sister from her pet seat in the chair cradle, at the end of the table.

Stanislarni listened, low-browed, to the Cherry Tree story, to the Crossing of the Delaware, to the sufferings at Valley Forge, to the insults put upon the first president by John Hancock, to the greetings of the maids at Trenton personating the thirteen states.

"Huh," commented young Poland, "not so much. He wasn't great as the great Sobieski."

Arthur realized, with a pang, he had never heard of the great Sobieski. However, he decided if Stanislarni wanted American statesmen he should have them, and promised Abraham Lincoln for the next night. Stanislarni listened, but still gave the palm to the great Sobieski.

"He stayed back, did Aberham Lincoln," was the crushing criticism of the man who raised millions for defense.

"But he wasn't a soldier," explained Arthur. "The country needed him to get money for the great war, and men. It was his duty to stay in the White House."

"Poh for such a president," sneered Stanislarni. "The great Sobieski did not do so. He ride front of all mans, waving sword, hollering Come on! He not get killed any theater show. He the great Sobieski!"

Again Arthur realized, with a pang, that he had never heard of the great Sobieski. So of course he couldn't be very great! Following an example in vogue long before the March Hare employed it as a means of extrication from conversational tangles, he was about to propose a change of subject, when 'Statia bobbed up and saved him the trouble.

"Shucks for great Sobieskis!" she cried. "We ain't Polisher no more. We're American. Aberham Washington is the Father of my Country anyhow, and Wajeiceh and Stepan's. Shut up, kids. I'm a-telling you. Now I suppose you couldn't, please, mister, tell us some those Hi-Jinks."

Hygiene was what she really enjoyed, and Arthur responded with a few words on "Mastication of Food." Stanislarni remained, but only to request a literary program next.

"Sure I come some more," he said, when Arthur timidly suggested a desire for the pleasure of his company. "You shall tell me Longfellow, Shakspere, Miss Beecher Toe, Lowell, Mass., and Lord God Byron."

"Arthur appears to have considerable of a job laid out," remarked Aunt Nancy, after a peep into the sitting-room, where all the poetry in the house was assembled.

"Hain't heard no complaint of late concerning his not having nothing to do," returned Uncle Abner.

Arthur felt pride in the result of his literary cramming. He took Longfellow to the bridge by moonlight, and then later he took him out and buried him and put up his monument in quite another place at Mt. Auburn; he compressed Shakspere into five hundred words, credited

Mrs. Stowe with starting the Civil War, sent Lowell as Ambassador to England, and let Byron die with gallantry in Greece.

"Huh," said Stanislarni, "didn't they make no poetry? The great Mickiewicz he made poetry."

Of course Arthur had never heard of the great Mickiewicz, but his chief regret was for not having understood Stanislarni's want. Why had he not prepared himself to repeat "The Psalm of Life" and "To Be or Not to Be?" instead of getting up a "theme"?

As usual, 'Statia came to the fore.

"Say, mister, don't get a peeve on Stanislarni. Tatulo—papa—talks all time on great Mickiewicz; but those readings about Coopies in the magazine teacher has to school is more nicer. Now I like we should learn about teeth some more. Stanislarni never heard that."

But the oldest Natupski firmly declined any but ethical information.

"Teeths to hell," he observed, with a succinctness at which Arthur alone shuddered. "Come on, now, you tell some American poetry and I'll tell some the great Mickiewicz made."

Arthur brisked up. "Oh, a debate!" he exclaimed. "That would be fun. And we'll ask Uncle Abner to judge."

"Such foolishers, you boys," sneered 'Statia. "Stanislarni can say it in Polish. Tha's all."

A cloud settled over the assembly, until it appeared that the girl had stuck up the boggy only to have the pleasure of knocking it down.

"Here, lemme tell you. Stanislarni learn the American, and you, mister——"

"Good!" cried Arthur. "I'll send for a translation tomorrow."

'Statia was somewhat bewildered, having probably thought Arthur could easily master the Polish tongue in a few days, and Stanislarni inquired in surprise if all "greats" were in American books.

"English?" said Arthur. "I suppose so."

Then why, Stanislarni wanted to know, were any of the people in his adopted country ignorant of the great Mickiewicz?

Arthur didn't stop to think up an explanation, he was trying to keep 'Statia from considering herself part of the debating team. In the end she was forcibly self-annexed to Arthur's side with the announcement that tatulo had "taught her a say." To make matters even Wajeiceh and Stepan were turned over to Stanislarni. "Let him have 'em both, mister," she remarked. "I guess they ain't no good."

Since it had been impossible to hide any light under any bushel in West Holly after the introduction of the rural 'phone, the fact that Abner Slocumb's nephew from the city had started a club to take in the Natupski children had been common property from the start. Now Arthur found that the coming literary trial was to be attended not only by Uncle Abner and Aunt Nancy, but by Mr. Hiram Farrar of the school board and the Rev. Mr. Skeele of the Methodist church.

Arthur made the shed chamber extra clean and incited 'Statia to helping him weave garlands of oak leaves and ground evergreen. Wajeiceh and Stepan were drafted, by their energetic sister, into helping. Only Stanislarni held aloof. He was fully occupied in trying to re-

member—not the words of his selected poem, but where to put his hands when reciting. Arthur, training his opponent with great conscientiousness, had said, “Oh, no, don’t wipe ’em on your sides—no, nor wave ’em in the air—no, indeed, you must not scratch your head—let ’em hang easy—see, like mine.”

“Sure,” said ’Statia, who assisted at everything. “Like mister’s, easy, right on the bend in his pants.”

Arthur flushed. He hadn’t been aware that the crease Aunt Nancy had so obligingly pressed into his serge trousers was so very noticeable!

The evening arrived, Mr. Farrar perspired in shirt sleeves, and the minister looked cool, as a minister must, in a black coat. Nancy had invited several of the neighbor women to hear the children speak pieces. With her they sat on the cradle bench and waved palm leaves. Mr. Natupski had come, armed with his goad. ’Statia whispered to Arthur that he was going to lick whoever forgot. Mrs. Natupski couldn’t come. Tadcuse was having all the afflictions of a baby’s second summer. They wouldn’t kill him, but they were severe, so Mrs. Natupski couldn’t come.

The shed chamber was a pretty sight, adorned with green garlands; on the table glowed a great bunch of marigolds, and golden rod and asters had been tacked all round the window space, making a frame for the night. Evidence of successful lectures on hygiene was visible in the clean face and hands of ’Statia and the relatively decent appearance of Wajeiceh. Stanislarni, it was rumored, would not wash until he might have to, when school began.

The selection for Wajeiceh had been made by Stanis-

larni, without reference to his comparative lack of acquaintance with the English tongue. Never, perhaps, had such work been made of "Spartacus to the Gladiators." Mr. Farrar and Abner had to laugh, but excused themselves by saying they remembered choosing that piece when they had to speak Fridays in the old red schoolhouse.

Then Stanislarni rose and began in a rumbling young bass voice:

*"What, Phoebe, are you come so soon—
Where are your berries, child?"*

He went on, in a manner beautifully serious, to give the whole twenty-eight stanzas of that immortal poem; indeed, with hardly a pause, he followed it with the next seventeen of "The Blackberry Girl at Church." Arthur was prepared for a start of surprise when that young ruffian—for Stanislarni was big for his age, and had a well-deserved reputation for pugnaciousness in the neighborhood—repeated this mawkishly sentimental story of old-fashioned almsgiving. It had been young Natupski's own choice from a book of "Selections." He was by no means deterred when Arthur had explained shrilly it wasn't real poetry or written by any one "great."

But the club director was not prepared for the chalking of a white line down the middle of each Stanislarni leg, soberly arranged by 'Statia just before the big boy stepped to the front.

"Because his pants don't bend," she explained, nodding intelligently to the rather astonished audience.

The English tongue having had adequate representation, it was now Poland's turn.

"Miss Anastasia Natupski will now recite two poems of Adam Mickiewicz, the most famous poet of Poland," said Arthur, in the easy manner he had acquired at the O. W. Holmes Guild, "and I will give them in English."

Miss Anastasia swelled with pride at her fine name, and spoke glibly. She knew she alone had to fear papa's goad; he couldn't be sure if the rest spoke correctly or otherwise.

Arthur got up rather wearily. He had been trotting about all day absorbed, like Martha, in many cares; he had sweltered in the hillside pasture pulling up ground pine, he had been worried with drilling the poor little boy, who ought, by rights, to have been required to lisp nothing more difficult than "I love little kitty" or "Mary had a lamb." The book with the translation had not arrived until the last minute, he had committed his lines to memory in the midst of sweeping, lugging chairs, and helping Aunt Nancy with the "refreshments." With the polite, well-drilled inanity of his excellently intentioned but shallow nature, he began:

THE FATHER'S RETURN

*Go, children, all together go
Unto the pillar on the hill,
Before the picture there bow low,
For father pray with all thy will.*

*For father still is far away,
Where streams are swol'n and wild beasts howl,*

*And seeking us, by night or day,
Must pass the wood where robbers prowl.*

In a pleasant tone Arthur told the story—the children prayed, then was heard "the sound of wheels approaching," and father arrives, asking:

*And is mother well, your aunt and the maids—
Here are grapes in the basket, boys.
Then glee resounds in the wooded glades,
And the air is rent with noise.*

Soon, however, joy turns to grief, for the robbers leap forth and the father is being borne away, when the leader of the band, "mustached, with saber drawn," orders him liberated. While lying in wait he had, it seemed, overheard the prayer of the children:

*Though I listened at first with laugh derisive,
Soon to pity my heart was stirred.*

*Merchant, depart—to the woods I go—
And, children, come sometimes here,
Before the pillar, bending low,
Give me a prayer and a tear.*

It was completed, and lo, a miracle.

Arthur fell in love! And though it was only with an author and a poem, it was as deep and sincere a love as could be given to any earthly object. This was indeed the great Mickiewicz—he knew it, he felt it. No wonder Stanislarni had been impatient of the pabulum spread

before him. Others felt as Arthur did, too. The wistful story had brought tears to the eyes of Aunt Nancy and the minister, while even Uncle Abner looked as he did at church. Mr. Natupski appeared startled at hearing his favorite author in an English version. Before the end of the poem he abruptly rose and threw his goad out of the window.

Thus there was nothing for him to do but pull his hair when, by way of a surprise, "Miss Anastasia" offered what she said was

Jeszcze Polska nie zginela

and which Arthur then gave as

Poland is not yet lost.

In unison (and English) they piped up

*While we live she is existing,
Poland is not fallen—*

and Mr. Natupski growled in the chorus,

*March, march, Dombrowski,
From Italy's plain.
Our brethren shall meet us
In Poland again.*

Arthur sat down, the exaltation of his mind showing in his eyes. He was firmly determined that whatever happened the next winter, he would read everything

Englished of Mickiewicz and Wybicki. The company drew numerous long breaths, and was only just able to come back to earth at the sight of lemonade and jelly roll cake.

Able, also, to talk of the sensation.

“Well, I vum,” said Mr. Farrar, “I never knew there was anybody wrote any poetry come up to Whittier’s ‘Barefoot Boy,’ but I must say—I s’pose, Mr. Skeelee, you’ve read all this Mr. Mikkywitz ever wrote?”

The minister shook his head, smiling.

“But I’m going to,” he remarked, exchanging a look of intelligence with Arthur.

The three gentlemen judges announced the Polish authors to have “won out,” and the copy of “One Hundred Choice Selections” which Abner Slocumb had provided as a prize was given to ‘Statia, who employed it variously during the evening to bang her younger brothers into good behavior and to strike envy to the heart of Stanislarni. That young gentleman was in the position of the reformer who lives to find himself the victim of his theories. He had bragged of the great Mickiewicz until even these Americans came to believe it just about the time he was coming to believe in other greatness. He guessed, anyhow, it all came from letting a girl in. That about “teeths” was just meant for a girl. He ostentatiously erased the chalk mark from each leg, and decided he would never have a real bend in his pants—a reform to which he had been almost persuaded earlier in the evening. He wouldn’t go to school any more, either. Books were no use. He would do like tatulo wanted, go into the Mifflin Mills, earn a heap of money—as much as five dollars a week—and in a few years have a farm

like papa. That was the thing to do. Papa could fix up a paper saying he had been born over sixteen years ago in Poland.

It was but a short time that the lantern hung o' nights in Abner Slocumb's shed chamber. Arthur went back to the city, and was only known to the Natupskis as the sender of frequent souvenir postal cards. One winter day, on returning from a strenuous session of the O. W. Holmes Guild, he found his mother smiling over a letter from Uncle Abner. There was a postscript.

Tell Arthur Stanylarny Natupski is gone to work in the mill where the hands live in bording houses sleping three in a bed for the day shift same for night adding up to half dozen and no chance to air or turn matras on a forged school cirtifycate. Stacy is doing better. She tole her ma she wold wash her neck whatever the weather and not with the kind of sope floors is washed with neither. So he has not lived in vane for its as much to save a girl as a boy and so your ant thinks too.

Arthur believed his work had not been without due reward, for if he hadn't taught the Natupskis much, the Natupskis had taught him a good deal—even more than appreciation for Mickiewicz and the great Sobieski, though that was much.

As for Stanislarni, he gave him up, even to the extent of cutting him from the souvenir card list. Arthur was a good sort, but un-eyed for the future. He could not discern when and where he would next find the name of Natupski, and in what juxtaposition to his own.

VII

EMANCIPATION FOR ONE

It could not be denied that America was having its effect on the Natupskis. Stanislarni, over at Mifflin Grove, had gone into a Chinese restaurant, eaten chop suey, and pronounced it "darn good." He said all Americans thought it was darn good. Wajeiceh wanted to argue with his father when his father refused to tell for what reason the boy would have a whipping. It was his assertion that no American father licked a boy without a reason. Did ever any one hear of such nonsense? Nine-year-old 'Rinka and seven-year-old Kazia said teacher said they should learn their lessons and go to bed, instead of staying in the barn until midnight dropping ears into the corn-sheller. She said she didn't keep a school for kids to sleep in. What d'ye say to that talk, tatulo?

Only Mrs. Natupski did not seem in the least reconstructed. She plodded on in the old country ways until even her very own children wished she wouldn't. First, from 'Statia's lips, came a sneering "Greenhorn!"

Mrs. Natupski made no reply, and 'Statia thought she didn't notice, but she did. She could think of a great many replies, but there was difficulty in employing them, because Mrs. Natupski had never really learned to speak English, while 'Statia was rapidly forgetting her little Polish speech. On the whole, thought Mrs. Natupski, it

would be better to tell Kani. She might be too hard on the girl, herself, for she was always a stepmother, and on this day felt like it. It would be a revelation to 'Statia to learn suddenly what a stepmother reared in Poland might do to a disobedient stepdaughter.

Mrs. Natupski did not expect sympathy from her husband, but his goad was generally so ready for action that Kani did not hold it in restraint even when it was only to be employed in avenging a mere insult to his wife. But this time papa was on 'Statia's side. He absolutely refused to beat the girl. 'Statia was only getting American. He liked that. He hoped all the children would get American. And he was going to buy a threshing-machine and no longer do it with flails like in the old country. As for what 'Statia said—wasn't it true?

And he went out with a swagger that showed he was wearing high-heeled, box-toed tan shoes, with white buttons on them!

Mrs. Natupski reflected. So she was a greenhorn, and worthy of being so called? She, the mother of seven, who had always done her share of the field work, and more than her share of the barn work, whatever her maternal duties or her household cares.

She looked on the next farm, and what did she see?

Nancy Slocumb, American without "getting" that way. Nancy rose at the advanced hour of 6.30, after Abner had started the fires, filled the tea kettle, ground the coffee, and put the potatoes boiling. Did Nancy do her share of work out of doors? Far from it. Mrs. Natupski had heard her calling Abner when she wanted so much as a head of lettuce from the garden.

Setting her lips and nodding her head, Mrs. Natupski

made up her mind that Kani had temporarily gone astray. When the shoes were worn out perhaps he would come to his senses. And in the meanwhile he must be paying for the thrasher.

Stanislarni gave the next jolt. He was her own son, and her first-born, so that the hurt from him far worsted 'Statia's. He came by the turnip field, one holiday, with a half-dozen mates—American boys from the grammar school in the village by the depot. Mrs. Natupski stopped work and waved her hoe with a shout, but Stanislarni hurried on, while the other boys laughed. Mrs. Natupski stood in the mud, stonily thinking. She did not realize the picture she made, wearing Kani's worn-out boots, a dragged skirt hanging in scallops, a jacket of Stanislarni's own from which all her wizened arms protruded below the elbow, and with her dark hair tied under a filthy red and yellow rag that in every thread proclaimed its old country origin.

She finished the field before she went back to the house and hung the hoe on a horizontal apple-tree limb already decorated with a row of scythes. Perhaps she might never take it down again!

Next day she went raspberrying. Kani had not expected her to go; instead he had laid out for her something like a hired man's full day, and a few duties over. But she went raspberrying, and lugged the pails of red berries halfway round the mountain, where she sold them to Mrs. Blanchard Bowes.

Whereby the Bowes family indulged in a luscious short-cake; Mrs. Natupski put forty cents into an old stocking, and Kani detailed plans for the morrow, to include all that day's work added to as much more. But Mrs.

Natupski picked raspberries while they lasted, then began on huckleberries, went on with them until blueberries, taking a detour into blackberries—low bush followed by high. Of course she could not do this every day, without being brought openly to account, and in her quiet way she decided the time for that was yet to come. She resumed the hoe and rake, and worked ably five days out of six, but the sixth was sure to find her missing, and she alone knew how the stocking-hoard grew.

Once she took her berries to a house way down the road to Hamson, where she had never stopped before. It was a tiny cottage, very clean and sparkling, from prismatic window-glass to whitewashed stones outlining the path to the barn. Even the grass seemed less dusty here than in any other dooryard that sultry August, and the scarlet runners trained on strings beside the wee porch had certainly been sponged off that very afternoon.

Mrs. Natupski knocked and a woman of about her own age came to the door. Like her house, she was not very beautiful, but exquisitely clean. She said the berries were "fine and dandy," and made Mrs. Natupski come in.

"You poor thing, you," she observed, "you must be all tuckered out. Set ye down and I'll fetch a cooling drink."

Mrs. Natupski perched on the edge of a wooden chair that glistened with three coats of thick yellow paint, until the woman came back with a big goblet of sweetened water—the combination of molasses, ginger, and H₂O once popular in haying time—and then it was evident the hostess intended to take her pay in sociability.

"Say," she began, "it's pretty plain we're both in the same boat. I'm right glad you happened along, too, for it's my first, and I'm scart out my wits in this out place. Husband says we can get a doctor in half a jiffy, with the telephone and all, but what if it was in the night and the girl in Central asleep? Does she keep awake, I'd like to know? And would she be willing to drink lots o' coffee about then, so's to be sure o' not closing her eyes? Another worry, too, is about getting some one to come and stay. We've got a reg'lar city nurse for ten days, but of course it will be some time after that before I'm around, and there don't seem to be nobody in this neighborhood that wants to hire out. How do you manage?"

Mrs. Natupski understood two-thirds of this, and rather wished she was able to reply. How did she manage? Why, sometimes, if it were winter, she did not go to the barn for as much as a week. Otherwise an addition to the family meant practically no change in her habits. As she was unable to answer she smiled again, and said, shaking her head, "Me Polander."

"Oh, you're one o' them families up on the mountain? Well, stay and rest a piece, do, even if we can't have a dish o' gossip. I'll go on with my work, if it's all the same. I'm in something of a hurry."

She was busy with a new wire dish drainer, and Mrs. Natupski hitched her chair nearer to see. First she drew on a covering of pale blue cambric, and then fitted a dainty slip of dotted white muslin with bows of blue ribbon. There were little pockets in the muslin, and these she proceeded to fill. A white brush went into one, a wash cloth sealed in wax paper into another, and then

appeared a regiment of pins, big and little, and various shaped cushions to hold them.

"Cute, eh?" the woman laughed, holding the completed basket aloft. "And light as a feather. Only ten cents, too—I mean the drainer."

Seeing the other's intentness, she continued, "If you want to wait I'll hyper upstairs and get all my things. They ain't so fancy, but I did 'em myself, every stitch."

Mrs. Natupski did wait, and handled the soft flannels, the white slips, the pink "outing" kimono, and the knitted cap with reverence.

"Got your things ready?" asked the woman, with the careless curiosity of a neighbor.

"*Nie!*" and Mrs. Natupski shook her head. She never had anything ready. The newest member of her family simply had to take a chance of being wrapped in something none of the rest was wearing.

"Oh, well, p'r'aps you got lots o' time. Or maybe you buy yourn. You can get real nice layouts all complete—layettes they call 'em, goodness only knows why. He got me a catalogue of one them mail-order houses, but I'd ruther make mine. Here 'tis; possibly you'd like to look it over."

She thrust into Mrs. Natupski's hand the twelve-pound book wherein was listed every known commodity, from malachite roofing to horseshoe nails. It opened of itself at the layettes, and the hostess pointed out the one she liked best.

"Everything plain, but the picshures say neat, and plenty enough for a summer or fall baby, when you can get to do washing regular. Only \$6.98. I d'know but I'd try it another time. One gets tired sewing, and it's

mighty easy to mark that cowpon, No. 5, put the money in a invellup, and nothing more. Well, must you be going? Come again, any time you get so fur. I'm always glad to see a friendly face."

The catalogue weighed more than two pails of berries, but Mrs. Natupski did not mind. She was in a hurry to count the contents of the stocking and see what she could make of the puzzling American coins.

Anything above fifty cents being beyond her comprehension, she was obliged to call on 'Statia for help.

"My, my, mamma, what a lot o' money," cried the girl, looking admiration at the accumulation of pennies and nickels. "Did papa give it to you? Papa's pretty good, ain't he?"

"How much?" demanded Mrs. Natupski, ignoring the question.

'Statia put the different coins by themselves, and after numerous false starts and long pauses, announced the sum-total of seven dollars and thirty-eight cents.

"Gee, mamma," she chattered, as Mrs. Natupski prepared to hide the hoard in her bosom, "you didn't ought to take that all places where you go. It's a whole lot. Why, some one might steal it."

"Sure. You lose it, all right!" Kani, having entered the kitchen in time to see the money disappearing, now lounged across the table, and giving the stocking a pull poured the coins into his own broad hands.

Mrs. Natupski silently produced the catalogue, which opened of itself at the layettes, and pointed out the \$6.98 outfit. Then she raised her eyes to Kani, and dropped them to the money, which represented such a number of aching backs, lacerated fingers, and sunburns on her part.

Surely he would see that she was at last trying to be an American. In Poland one did not so, but this was very different from Poland, as Kani and 'Statia had often reminded her.

Kani rose from the table, with his favorite grunt, and poured the jingling mass into his pockets, dividing it pretty equally on both sides of his khaki trousers.

"Safe!" he said, condescendingly. "Me not get robbed. Me take care of all money."

It seemed to Mrs. Natupski that she had always known this would happen. She put the catalogue into the stove with her regret already overcome by further determination. Some day she and Kani would have it out with each other. Not yet!

The eighth member of the brood arrived one hot September day, and lacking a layette seemed quite healthy and happy dressed in nothing particular, and the fates undecided whether she should bear an old country name of many syllables or a brisk American one sounding like a sudden cry for help.

Kani was displeased, not only because the child failed to be another boy, but by the way his wife lay on the straw tick, smiling pleasantly, and having for her only occupation the keeping comfortable of a baby that had chosen to arrive in fly-time. Why didn't she get up and attend to things, as always before? Couldn't she know the wheat was ready to reap, the apples ripe for carting to the vinegar mill? Did she feel a sickness anywhere, he asked anxiously, whereat she shook her head and settled more comfortably in bed. Kani didn't know how extremely difficult the muscular woman, used to

constant outdoor activity, was finding this self-imposed rest. He could not see her jump when he went out, and trot from window to window in her bare feet, grinning to note how things lagged for want of her. Determined to keep her bed ten days, Mrs. Natupski consulted the calendar, each morning. Hereon she had marked the day of her release; it gleamed cheerfully beneath a lugubrious picture of a bereaved widow (unprotected by life insurance) scrubbing a living for her children. The calendar was a tribute from the agent, who hoped to land Natupski (and failed).

On Tuesday she would get up and resume life as she lived it. Not before.

Saturday she descried Kani conversing with two men of their own nationality, and he even had them into the kitchen and treated to the cider he was saving for the harvest. Then he came upstairs and asked once more if she felt anywhere sick? *Nie!* Then why did she not get up? She only shook her head and rustled the straw. Kani came nearer and his face assumed its occasional mask of anger. She should get up, then, if he was obliged to pull the bed down. He had the harvesters coming Monday, and she must go out and bind. No one, and well she knew it, was so skilful at the binding. He had put it off two weeks now, the grain was spoiling and could wait no longer. She must get up and be ready for work by Monday.

"*Nie!*" said the woman. And added that she did not stir from that until Tuesday.

Kani set his jaw and clenched his hands until the knuckles turned white. Tuesday—what nonsense! That was no time to begin, he was obliged to hire the men for a

full week. The work was promised and a drink had bound the bargain. She would get up Monday. If she didn't—he waved his hand in a way that showed how he manipulated the ox-goad.

Mrs. Natupski, left to her own reflections, stole a reassuring look at the calendar, and waited for the eve of Monday. If she made an excursion to the barn before then no one knew it, not even the baby, who was proving a splendid sleeper. Sunday evening Mrs. Natupski called 'Statia before supper was put cooking. What was there to eat? Oh, just the bread and coffee. Papa said if any one wanted more to go and sneak some peaches from the Bowes' orchard. Mrs. Natupski handed 'Statia a broken cup in which was a small amount of white powder.

"Tatulo," said Mrs. Natupski.

'Statia nodded. She supposed it was sugar that Mrs. Slocumb or some one had given mamma for the baby. As the quantity was so small 'Statia honorably refrained from dipping even a moistened finger tip.

Mrs. Natupski, listening in the twilight, heard the meal begin—the scraping of chairs, Kani's sudden admonitions to the children, little nose-just-out-of-joint Tadcuse's cry for milk before (evidently) 'Statia had it warmed, a big slam when Stepan's tin plate went on the floor, a grumble from Wajeiceh—that boy was his father over again—and finally a roar as of an infuriated bullock. Mrs. Natupski sat up, her hair dangling in elf locks about her weather-beaten face. "He's got it," she told herself, "He's found it." Shrieks from the children, and denials in voices gruff and shrill from Wajeiceh and 'Statia brought her to her feet. Sounds of a lash vigorously wielded took her downstairs.

— “Stop! stop!” she cried in Polish to Kani. “They don’t know. I did it.”

He tipped against the wall and stared at her with a perspiring forehead. “You? Lying abed there, what do you know? The coffee. A devil’s mess. Only mine. A white powder in it, just like what me put on the potato in the summer. Only me keep the barrel covered. Mr. Slocumb tell it is poison, kill one like it kill potato bug.”

His wife nodded. Then she said, “Whatever was in your coffee, Kani, I gave it to ’Statia for you.”

“Why? Why?” he was inarticulate in amazement.

The woman grew voluble, in her own language. “You say I am not American. ’Statia, there, who is none of mine, calls me greenhorn. My boy, Stanislarni, is ashamed of his mother when he is with depot boys. You, Kani, tell me I must defend myself, that ’Statia is right, and you cannot stop her calling me names. Very well. I will defend myself. And I will be American.”

Taking a reef in her petticoat, which had pulled itself awry in bed and was slipping from her waist, she went on, “American woman buy pretty things for their American babies. But no, I cannot buy such things. American women keep the money they earn by berries and butter. But no, I am a greenhorn. I would lose my money. American women stay in bed ten days when their babies come.”

She paused, and saw that Kani was listening intently, then she ended in a crescendo, “Very well, I will lie in bed ten days. It is only nine days till Monday, when the harvest begins. I will not get up. An American lady only gets up for a funeral. And for only a funeral will I get up!”

Kani made one jump and she was afraid, for a moment, that her last hour had come. However, he merely grabbed her by shoulders and waist and hoisted her to the floor above, there to be deposited on the straw mattress. Pushing the covers to her chin, he emptied his pockets, making a pyramid of pennies and nickels on the place where the solar plexus is popularly supposed to lurk.

"Take rest, Marinki," he whispered, "take rest. The men come tomorrow, pick up apples. Wheat—me begin wheat on Tuesday."

Mrs. Natupski, every nerve and muscle quivering for exercise, breathed elation as she resigned herself to another twenty-four hours' imprisonment. She could hear Kani throwing out the coffee and smashing the cup. He could never know she had won emancipation with two spoonfuls of powdered plaster from a rat-hole near her bed.

VIII

A SNOOT AT THE LAW

Two years had been added to the history of West Holly since Kani Natupski paid for his farm and lost his health, but he had by no means "gone away." Built up with chicken broth and cream from the Slocumbs' store, he was afterward able to thrive under his own regimen.

Behold him, blessed with excellent health, a growing family, a clear farm; and absolutely miserable!

He perceived he was not rich. Eleven years in America, nine children, and not rich. In spite of his one hundred acres of well-tilled land, his fat cows, his monstrous pigs, his smart horse, a poor man. For he had nothing beyond the farm and stock—not even money to buy more, which he coveted. It was hard to understand.

"Eleven year from Poland," he muttered, "and not rich."

It upset all his calculations.

To be sure the neighbors all about him were likewise poor, but they were Americans. Abner Slocumb not only still owned to his mortgage, but seemed to think he would have it always. "Inherited the darned thing from granddad," he had been known to remark in a jocular moment, when the interest was just paid. "Nance and I couldn't keep house without it." Americans understood nothing of the way to live. They turned up their very remarkable noses at the broken bread which

Kani continued to have shipped weekly from the city. Yet it cost much less than any other food, and with coffee made from the chicory one grew it formed a satisfying meal. Of course the chickens didn't like it very well, but then it was best to feed them cracked corn. One had to pamper animals and fowls, else they lay down and died. Kani had learned this by many bitter experiences in those now far-off days when he was struggling with quarterly payments to Mrs. Buckland—when Marinki had but lately come from Poland. Now he had acquired wisdom in feeding stock, though he still expected his family to restrain their present appetites in the interest of future fortunes.

Long as he had lived beside them he had not ceased to wonder over Americans, who were determined to eat, whether or not they prospered. And even more bewildering was the fact that these Americans not only had no children, but rejoiced thereat. Mr. and Mrs. Abner Slocumb in their childless neatness on the one side had for several years been balanced by the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Hiram Farrar in the old Pinkney place on the other side. The Farrars were pretty old. Kani Natupski had supposed they were grandparents, and artlessly inquired after the supposed grandchildren one day when he and Hiram were mutually strengthening a line fence.

"Ah," drawled Mr. Farrar, "there you have me where the hair's short. Always wanted to be a grandpa, felt I was cut out for it. Looked forward to it for years. Should have been one, in fact, but for a trifling obstacle. Don't amount to much, but it's kept me what I be, and that ain't a grandpa. It's only this—never raised no children."

"Your lil' boy die?" asked Natupski. "Too bad!"

"Die? He wasn't never born nor thought of."

"Girl?" Natupski was still hopeful, though not enthusiastic.

"Not so much as twins. Guess it's just as well. Boys generally fetch up in jail, and a girl only stays around till you get attached to her and then marries the meanest scamp in town. Children are an awful responsibility. My wife thought so too. And then, she was a Pinkney."

Natupski understood some of this, but remained unshaken in his own belief that babies were so many aids to the wealth that he still wished might lie in the future.

Shortly afterward he received a jolt in stumbling over Abner Slocumb's point of viewing the same subject.

Passing congratulations on the news that Mrs. Natupski had made her eighth exertion to add to the number of incipient farmhands in her husband's house, Abner Slocumb followed the common fashion of a dig in the ribs and the remark, "Lucky dog, wish I was in your shoes!"

It meant nothing, because Natupski never seemed to sense half you said, for one thing, and for the other you didn't hanker to stand in his leather at all, you and your wife being united in the same opinion as that of the Farrars, that a snarl of young ones was a useless expense and a pesky nuisance bound to worrit you into your grave. But Abner neglected to say this in plain language, so his sentiments were quite unappreciated by partially Americanized Poland.

Natupski, after he had gone away and ruminated a while, came back with the following outrageous proposi-

tion: "You pretty good man. Me help you out. Me see. You all 'lone. No children. No help. Me help. Me go right over your house. No baby. Next spring, baby. Me like you. You pretty good man."

If any other had made the suggestion Mr. Slocumb would have surely led him out into the swale and licked the galluses off the wretch, but it didn't seem worth while getting mad with the little Polack. Abner contented himself with doing as he should have done in the first place, expressing his delight at having no mouths to feed but those of "self and wife." After that Natupski went home miffed; so, once more, the two nations rested, each determined t'other in the wrong.

On realizing that he was not rich, Kani naturally sought a corrective for the situation among his offspring. He was at work, himself, early and late; and Marinki, with whom he most gallantly shared his complaint against fate, was likewise never idle. What, he would have her tell him, could they do that was now undone?

She it was who set 'Statia up with crocheting. A length of dirt-incrusted edging was now always dangling from the girl's chapped wrist, whether she fed the chickens, drove home the cows, or tended the baby, whose name had tumbled from the grab-bag of fate in the romantic form of Yadna. 'Statia also did all the housework that was done, so that mamma could continue saving the wages of a man in such light forms of labor as cultivating, haymaking, harvesting.

Stanislarni was still earning wages in Mifflin, the larger part of which was carefully banked. The other children were kept loaded with duties, from the hour when Kani kicked them out at dawn, until they fell into

torpor, which was often shortly after they had completed the long walk from school.

Suddenly Mrs. Natupski seemed to go crazy. She laughed, she clapped her hands, then slapped papa on his khaki-covered knee until the dust rose in puffs.

School—that was the trouble. Hours and hours every day those children had been spending in that white-painted building, wherein they learned strange and inconvenient things—to drink only from individual paper cups, to wash with soap that came out of a nickel spout.

The two were interrupted in their cogitations by the sudden entrance of 'Statia, who dashed long-leggedly up the slope to the barn, her fingers busy in her vermin-teased hair, and her tongue wrapped hastily about the collection of consonants informing papa that the cattle were out.

Out, when he had put them into the big upland pasture that very day, and nailed the barway with long spikes? Oh, the brutes had broken down the fence in another spot, had they? He'd see about that. Seizing his goad, and giving 'Statia a tentative cut about the knees, which of course she deserved as the bearer of bad tidings, he slouched his way into the road and down the grass-grown track.

"Come 'long," he bawled at 'Statia, who replied, partly, "Can't. It's schooltime."

Well, there would be no school for her, mamma broke in eagerly, nor yet for Wajeiceh, nor 'Rinka, Kazia, or Novia. And Kani added, as an improving clause to this license, that they might all come and help him build fence.

So Miss Olive Greene was forced to attend to her duties in District 7 with most of her primary grades absent.

And Natupski got his cattle only after he had sleuthed them almost to Holly Centre and paid a certain sum per head "poundage." A farmer there had, it seems, found them wandering in the highway, and shut them in his barn. Kani was forced to settle for their "board and keep" and something over as a fine.

It was a harrowing experience for a man who had just begun to perceive that he was not rich. But when the last strip of wire was fastened atop of the old stone-wall that formed the basis of all the fencing which Natupski had secured when he bought the Buckland place, when the unused part of the coil was abandoned among the hardhack and bittersweet until it should be loudly sought for next time, when the children were sucking at lacerated fingers and mamma was binding up Wajeiceh's forehead, bruised by a flying hammerhead, Kani had the idea.

He did not tell his wife exactly what it was, it not being good for a woman to know too much of a man's plans, but he gave her a grunt of praise for having suggested keeping the children home from school, since therein lay the best of the plan. He added, "Now we going to be rich," and Marinki believed him.

It being unlucky to "carry Jews" (nod) when one has work to do, Kani determined to begin laying the foundation for his fortune that very night. It was dark and very muggy; black silence hung alike over the dwelling of Kani Natupski and his brood and that of the Slocumbs. In that point alone were the dwellings akin.

Natupski's was, of course, littered up with children. Neighbors sometimes wondered how they got along with so many cradles over there, but these wonderers were

not the near neighbors, who knew the popular bed for a young Natupski was a soap-box.

Kani and his wife never undressed. In the winter one's clothes assisted economy in blankets. In the summer what was the use when one must rise at dawn and that came at four o'clock?

Mr. and Mrs. Slocumb, in their matted chamber, laid their heads upon ruffled pillows, and if it turned cold before morning would snuggle their bodies under a log cabin quilt entirely silk, satin, and velvet.

Natupski had no real cause for worrying, beyond the fantastic desire for a fortune; Abner Slocumb was being considerably pressed for money. His complaisant creditor had passed away, leaving his estate in the hands of trustees. They had turned the Slocumb mortgage over to a bank, and the bank, in a heartless manner, demanded its interest.

Nevertheless the sound sleepers were not on the erstwhile Judson Buckland place.

"Up, up," whispered Kani, in a vigorous hiss, "up, lazy loafers!" And he administered kicks with such indiscrimination that the next to littlest baby got a couple, and Stepan too, while the cat—Natupski's cat was the finest in the neighborhood, no one could tell why—indignantly removed herself to Mrs. Natupski's side and licked her whiskers in an aggrieved manner.

"What's matter, papa?" called 'Statia from the next bare floor. "Anybody got colic?"

No, but somebody might have something worse if he or she didn't hurry. He wanted her, 'Statia, and Wajeiceh and—yes, 'Rinka might come. Only stop scratching that match. He'd have no light.

Mrs. Natupski raised herself on her elbow. She supposed he was going out to harvest oats. But he had better take her along, rather than the children.

To which Kani interposed a rough refusal. If she came away the baby would be sure to cry. For his purpose the children were well enough.

So he led them, stumbling and stuttering sleep in their limbs, through the night to the upland pasture where the Slocumb cattle chewed their cuds and breathed heavily in well-fed content.

The next morning Abner Slocumb, making a long arm for another doughnut at his breakfast table, was informed by a friendly passerby that his cattle must be out—fences seemed to be down all along the mountain road. Abner did not reach for his goad, nor lash Nancy with either whip or hard words. He kept right on forking the nut-cake, and only called the cattle “pesky varmints.”

They were discovered quite safe in the Natupski barnyard, and Slocumb borrowed fifteen dollars from Blanchard Bowes to redeem them, giving Natupski hearty thanks in addition for having, by presumed early rising, prevented the animals straying.

A few more days and the same tale disturbed Blanchard Bowes himself, then Hiram Farrar, then Mercy Bruill, who promptly fell in hysterics and claimed widow's redemption, as in taxes, but all of whom paid, and gave Natupski grateful words into the bargain.

No one thought it strange the cattle were always found in his barnyard. He was up at all hours, the little runt, while his young ones forever scoured the hills.

Kani believed he had discovered the source of all wealth, the golden fleece, the Apples of Hesperides, the

Midas touch, and the one place in America where, as had been told before he came from Poland, one might find nuggets in the streets. It was so easy. One had only, with the children's aid, to stampede the animals in the direction of the weak link in the chain of fence—every fence had one, or you made it—and presto! they were in the highway. Then to bed for a few hours, to rise before dawn and as like as not discover the beasts making havoc with your corn or garden. After which you collected fifteen dollars—eighteen—even twenty—and added it to the store. All a by-product, too, since one worked just as efficiently by day, only allowing the children a long noontide nap under the shade of a haystack.

It went beautifully only for one impediment—Mrs. Natupski! Think of Marinki talking almost as boldly as that Nancy Slocumb, who had never produced a boy, talked to her Abner. Was there something in this American air?

For several nights Mrs. Natupski listened sleepily while papa turned out the older children, but so weary was the poor drudge that her curiosity did not awaken. She only rejoiced that he didn't need her, and turned to deeper rest. Finding Nancy Slocumb sobbing under the blueberry bush first stirred the little dark woman to inquiry. Shifting her own pail of berries to better balance the baby, she tapped Nancy on the shoulder and nodded questioningly.

"Don't mind me," snapped Nancy, who felt "madder'n a wet hen" at being caught making a fool of herself. "I came out here to have a good bawl where Abner shouldn't know nothing about it. It's the interest money. We're behindhand, and banks ain't given to waiting. Had

it all saved up, but the cattle have acted so like all possessed getting out and it's gone in pound fines."

Then she threw her apron over her head and added inconsequently, "No other L-kitchen 'll ever seem home to me. I know just what sort of an east wind 'll make the stove smoke every time."

People were apt to think Mrs. Natupski dunderheaded, but she was nothing of the sort. A very little musing and a few questions of the children made the matter plain to the quiet little woman. Kani saw to it that the cattle got loose, and then, owing to some mysterious American law, he was enabled to get money for driving them back to their owners. Mrs. Natupski approved of it all, except as concerning the Slocumbs. Nancy had become endeared by numerous kindnesses, sullenly received. Mrs. Natupski determined the Slocumb cattle should henceforth be sacred.

It was truth that Kani had been a bit hard on Abner. His pasture was most convenient, to be sure, and when one was very sleepy it was a temptation to stop at the first fence, instead of climbing higher. Blanchard Bowes was a rich man, and better able to pay; the Pinkney-Farrar sisters had been disagreeable to the Natupski children, and there might be satisfaction in turning their creatures loose, but Slocumb suffered because of propinquity. Three times he had paid the scot, and once more he seemed to be marked as victim.

Dreamily in the now familiar darkness Kani and his children played their parts. Down rolled the stones into a soft bed of fern, the two strands of wire being pulled to the ground and held by another stone. It looked like a place where berry-pickers had made their way. A little

scattered salt attracted the cattle, and with sleepy "Shoos!" the children drove them to the highway and turned them in the right direction. At least that was the attempt, when Kani was fully roused by the appearance of a white-clothed figure, while an earnest voice said, "*Nie, Kani, nie!*"

It was Marinki, right in the opening, so that the cattle had already turned back.

"Mamma!" yelled 'Statia, in a voice to alarm the township, but papa stilled her with a kick.

Mrs. Natupski, standing obstinately at the hole in the wall, talked at her husband in a way no one would have believed. Any other cows, very well. But not Mr. Slocumb's. Not his any more. To which Kani made reply—a grunt. Then Marinki again—oh, yes; he, Kani, was certainly a wise and a great man, and his plan to be rich was very wonderful; all the more, then, let out Blanchard Bowes' twenty-nine head rather than Slocumb's half dozen. Another mile to go for them? What was another mile up the mountain to a strong man? Kani's comment on this was expressed in a sibilant click of tongue on teeth, and a threatening snap of his fingers. His wife kept right on. She would have him tell her if it was quite safe, all this? Was there not a great danger of being found out and somehow made to suffer? Mr. Slocumb, now, lived near, and was always building up his fence. Would he not begin to think it strange the wall so often fell down? And then might not even Mr. Slocumb turn to the law. In Poland, now——

Kani, quite infuriated, lashed the darkness, but missed the woman. She had touched a little spot where the germ of fear had already been established, not by easy-going,

trustful Abner Slocumb, but by Mr. Blanchard Bowes himself. Kani could not surmise why, he blurted out, but Mr. Bowes seemed to think it very strange his cattle were loose a second time, and had made sharp remarks about getting a constable to search for wire-cutters if such a thing occurred again. Kani had determined so rich and fierce-spoken a man could be a source of revenue no longer. But Abner Slocumb had always fair words and a confiding manner. Having thus explained why it must be Slocumb cattle and not those of Bowes, Kani hissed to keep his courage up, "Law! American law! Poh! Poh! Me make a snoot at it! Me make a snoot at American law!"

Marinki did not move; the Slocumb cows still lounged along the fence. Then, "Out of the way!" Kani suddenly whispered. "Me drive cows over you."

With a slap on the back a big Holstein was made to dash onward, and the baffled woman, sobbing with anger, made a hasty step and fell, tangled in the wire.

"Oi! Oi!" she moaned, as the barbs tore her hair and gashed her thinly clad body. Each time she essayed to rise another bulky animal would scramble past her, sending a shower of pebbles to sting her face, and compelling her to curl and shrink lest she should be trodden by the awkward, cloven feet.

The last, a skittish two-year-old, did give her an untoward kick, then the herd clumped off in the darkness and she realized she was quite alone. Kani and the children never returned along the road after these nocturnal adventures. He drove the little ones through a path among the sweet fern and sumach bushes, and so by the rear into their own domicile. It was important

that any bad sleeper who might note cattle straying by the road should not see any human beings near.

Marinki had not the slightest idea what hour it might be, only it was very, very dark. Well, there would be no hole in heaven if anything happened to her. That was a consoling thought. So closely was she held by the barbs and by a large stone that had pinned down her petticoat that she could not move without increasing the scratches. She was not afraid, out there on that lonely hillside, but she was very tired, and the comparative softness of her straw bed at home would have been grateful. Anger continued to keep her warm, and she made up her mind, heavily but decidedly, that Kani must now be made to give way. He had done as he liked this time, but there would be other times. Dawn did come presently; by its first light Mrs. Natupski picked herself up, extracted the burrs and beggar lice from her garments, and made her way home, sucking the most accessible of her wounds.

Mrs. Natupski determined to remember the words, "Constable," "Snoot," "American law." Each morning for a week she repeated them like a prayer. Indeed, right after prayer. It was difficult to learn how to write them, but the children assisted, each one a bit, so that no one might suspect.

In due time "Constable" (official title, not name, as Mrs. Natupski had believed) received a rumpled postal card, which informed him that Kani Natupski "Snoots at American law." The handwriting was undecipherable, being verily that of the Natupski family, for Mrs. Natupski managed her husband's name, 'Statia did snoots in the best perpendicular of District Number Seven, 'Rinka accomplished American with the aid of consider-

able tongue chewing, and *law* in Polish alone demanded an interpreter. The constable obtained one, in the person of a schoolboy who knew more English slang than words in his father's tongue. "Snoots at American law, eh?" observed the constable. "I wonder who in tarnation is so concerned to tattle on the chap? And one of his own jargon talkers, too."

"I've heard pa say the Nick Kovinskis got it in for the Natupskis," volunteered the youthful interpreter.

"Shucks, you don't say? What seems to be the trouble?"

"Well, Mr. Kovinski married a lady was married to Natupski once."

"Reason enough!" shouted the constable. "Making snoots at American law. Gosh, that might be most anything. What's my next move? Oh, call on Miss Olive Greene. These schoolmarms know all about their scholars' folks."

The constable's next move was nearly always to call on Miss Olive Greene, but in the midst of an entrancing evening he did manage to introduce her Polish pupils.

"Polish pupils," she replied. "I haven't any. The Natupskis have not been to school since May. I sent word to the truant officer, but I suppose it will be vacation before he gets to this out-district. I'm scared to go after them myself. The man looks so fierce, and the woman can't talk English, so I don't know if she's abusing me or not."

The constable rose in excitement. So that was it? A snoot at law indeed. It should rise in its majesty—that was him—and overcome the snooters.

Mrs. Natupski had been watching every day for the coming of strangers. She supposed Kani would go to prison, but her own wrongs, in which Nancy Slocumb's tears formed a coalition with festering scratches, kept her firm. Kani appeared to have forgotten the night incident, and impelled his wife to work as eagerly as ever. There had come a lull in turning cattle out, but perhaps that was because of a moon in its second quarter.

At last the strangers arrived. Three men piled in a narrow buggy. They stopped to ask a question of Abner Slocumb. Abner turned his thumb Natupski way.

Mrs. Natupski kept right on hoeing beans. The children stood in a gaping row. One of the men alighted and handed a paper to Kani. It bore a red seal and in all eyes was awesome. Mrs. Natupski began to tremble. After all, had she done so well? Suppose Kani was put in irons? What if he should be carried to some far-off place, leaving her alone with the children? She did not notice she was hoeing badly. A half-grown bean plant was sacrificed.

One stinging box on the ear brought her back. The men were cramping the buggy wheel. Evidently they intended to go away. Perhaps they would come again for Kani, or send.

"'Statia," he was calling.

Giving her the paper he ordered her to read.

'Statia wrinkled her neatly penciled brows, and scratched her head—partly from doubt. Then she looked up puzzled. It was too much for her understanding.

Kani made a quick trip to the Slocumbs', Marinki trailing after.

Abner laid down his pipe and took up the paper.

"Oh, ho, Natupski," he said, "it seems you've been breaking the law."

Kani denied it, solemnly.

"Oh, you have. It's all here in black and white. You was a good 'n' law-abiding citizen up to last May, and then you commenced your career of crime."

Natupski leaned on the fence and essayed a sickly smile.

His wife ventured to draw near and lean on the same fence without reprimand. Looking closely, she perceived that her husband's knees trembled.

"And since then you have infracted—that is, bu'sted—said law no less than eight times and under six separate and identical counts. It's all here!"

Natupski, the trembling now extended to his hands, turned to his wife and whispered the figures. Rapidly she counted on her fingers. Slocumbs' four times, and the Bowes's cattle twice, the Sawyer girls'—yes, truly, all came to eight. And the six? Well, Slocumb had six cows, if that meant anything.

Wonderful, wonderful that what a man did in the dark should come out in a paper, quite correct. Mrs. Natupski was lost in amazement. Kani was shaking all over, his few teeth chattering against each other despite the eighty degrees of heat quivering in the air.

Mrs. Natupski drew still nearer her frightened mate, nudged his elbow, and pointed to Mr. Slocumb. Kani understood.

Drawing a wad of bills from the belt which never left his body, sleeping or waking, Kani counted out forty-five dollars.

"Others after supper," he shook out of himself, and turned away.

"Stop, stop, what's this for?"

"Cow," murmured Natupski.

"Aw, get out. You was in your rights there. Keep your cash and say no more about it. I'm going to let that breachy two-year-old go for the interest, and without her to lead 'em on I bet yer my cows won't make any more trouble."

Mrs. Natupski, firm, and Mr. Natupski, trembling, pointed to the paper.

"This? Oh, it says if you don't now and forth-with send Anystatiz and Wajeiceh and Marinka and Kazia, yes, and Novia to school in Deestrick Seven and keep 'em there each schoolday until every last one of 'em's turned of fourteen, you'll be haled to court and made to tell what for. God save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts."

Mr. and Mrs. Natupski turned toward one another, united in horror. Before them stretched long years of toil, unremitting, lightened by the assistance of the second generation only at infrequent intervals known as vacations.

What a country was this America, famed for liberty, yet where parents might not manage their own children! Abner chuckled.

"Nine of 'em now, ain't there? Mighty pooty little family. Darn sight pootier'n ten."

Natupski was Americanizing fast. He replied to Slocumb's jest in the very words Slocumb had once used.

"Luckee dog. Me wish me was in your shoe."

Eleven years in America, nine children, all but one to be kept in school until 14. Natupski perceived he never would be rich.

THE SECOND GENERATION

I

POTS AND KETTLES

AMERICAN language as adopted by the Natupski family made constant use of the term "Where does it get you?" It was no use to wash your face. That got you nowhere. Why exterminate vermin? That also got you nowhere. By working early and late, eating little and saving much, one (reasoning from analogy) got somewhere.

Stanislarni Natupski had eagerly consented to leave school at thirteen and enter the Mifflin Mills. No one but Arthur Slocumb had expected him to do anything better.

He remained in the mills until he was (actually) over seventeen. Being nerveless and teachable he had advanced steadily until he finally held down a well-paid job. Bosses recognized that Natupski did not go to pieces in the last hour of the working day, when so many did go to pieces and forfeit their fingers or their back hair, according to sex. Even the horrors of the rooms where humidifiers were installed had no effect on him. He swabbed perspiration and worked right on with customary stolidity.

If Stanislarni had stuck it out he might have been made a "super." More likely he would not have been made a super, but would have figured at seventy-five in a newspaper item as the marvelous old man who had been given

a gold-headed cane in recognition of his record—over sixty years on one corporation.

One early summer morning, when four years advanced toward this enticing goal, Stanislarni rose and turned his bed over to the night-shift man, who was already clamoring for it. He vaulted the pile of filth which automatically gathers at the outer doors of factory tenements, and stepped briskly toward the brick bevy over the bridge. It was not a day for indoors. Bits of fluff were the only clouds in the blue, the trees were greening, violets dotted the roadside grass, and a robin sang on an electric light pole.

Stanislarni heard a panting breath by his side, and looked down on Pania Wazowski. Pania was not long from Poland. She wore a shawl over her head, and the family breakfast, a loaf of bread, was hugged closely to the bosom of her dirt-stiffened gown.

"'Lo," she said, shyly. "Where you going, Stan Natupski?"

Stanislarni heard the clock strike six. He had thought it would strike seven. Then he remembered the hours of the night shift had been changed. What should he say to Pania? Where was he going? For a moment he thought he would go and pull that night-shift man out of his bed—but no, let the poor fellow snooze. It would be bad if a fellow could not fill in an hour on a June morning. Still—*Stan Natupski, where are you going?*

Paying no further heed to the pattering Pania—Stanislarni never did pay heed to girls—he turned abruptly from the millward way and struck into the road leading to the city of which Mifflin Grove was a somewhat independent suburb. He had ridden over this road,

after dark, in trolleys, he had never walked it before. Soon the corporation tenements were past, he saw long rows of houses, set in yards, with gardens and shrubs for further beautifying. Lace curtains waved in the morning air, behind screen doors good-smelling breakfasts were cooking. Everybody was taking in ice, milk, the morning newspaper, an Angora cat. Stanislarni had been used to a few such dwellings about the mills, but they were set apart for the élite—supers and such. Here were hundreds of them. The side streets, as he passed, were lined with granolithic sidewalks and automobiles. It would appear, then, that the ordinary citizen had these things—not the one or two “big” men whom Stanislarni had contentedly observed from an acknowledged lowly plane.

Quite forgetful that seven o'clock now impended, Stanislarni decided to find out who lived in these fine houses. It being his way to proceed instantly in pursuit of any idea, he began walking boldly to door after door. If a plate or card showed above the electric bell he read it. Otherwise he rang and bluntly inquired who lived there. No one paid any attention, beyond answering his questions. He was taken for a stupid boy looking for a job.

At the end of an hour Stanislarni had accumulated a mass of evidence that might have been useful to a political worker. His memory—marvelous, only no one ever told him so—informed him that besides Smiths, Browns, and Birnies, “American names,” there were a good many McCarthys and O'Briens and a vast number of Goldmans, Levys, Cohens, and Aronsons. That is, it was not impossible for foreign-borns to support mansions and

send their offspring to school with big hairbows and white socks.

Yet not one Polish name!

Stanislarni had hitherto honored his father for working hard and living poor, now he doubted. It really seemed that the way his country people lived was wrong. It got them nowhere.

The time had crept on to nine. The boss had by this time cursed Stanislarni well and thoroughly, and put his machines in charge of another. Stanislarni didn't care. He was thinking that all the folks in the office, the writing girls in white waists, the bookkeepers, the draftsmen, did not get on the job until this preposterous hour. When he and thousands others had forgotten breakfast and almost sniffed dinner, these strolled in picking their teeth. It wasn't fair, it wasn't. Stanislarni had been so busy earning wages and getting promoted that he hadn't thought much about it; now he decided it wasn't fair. He felt the unfairness so strongly that he brought his big fist down slam! while telling himself it wasn't fair.

"Ouch!" grunted the object banded, that turned out to be the back of a fat neck. It appertained to a man who had been leaning over a gate in an endeavor to see up the street and ascertain that Mary and Katy got safely to the other side.

"Excuse—excuse, please," gasped the Polish boy, and the stout gentleman kindly did so, even while shaking pieces of collar button into places where they would be least annoying.

At intervals he looked Stanislarni over. Then he said, "I've seen you before. Half an hour ago I was to the

grocer's and you went up all the doorsteps on Banks Street. What place was you looking for?"

"No place," said Stanislarni. "I just wanted to know how many houses was lived in by fellers from the old country."

"How you find that out?"

Stanislarni briefly explained. The other's eyes brightened at this intellectual turn to the affair, while apologies were offered for unconsidered belittlement.

"I supposed you was looking for a job. And it was statistics. Say, I'm some bear on statistics myself. Won't you come in?"

Thus was Stanislarni introduced to the interior of one of the gorgeous mansions. This was a very gorgeous one. It had a porte-cochère, though lack of any wide gate implied dearth of carriage company. There was also a sleeping porch, occupied by the Boston terrier. The stout man took his guest to a den by way of a long meander through a green velvet parlor, a white enamel dining-room, and a living-room so mission that Stanislarni took it for a Baltimore lunch. He had seen a Baltimore lunch when he went to the city Saturday nights for a hell of a time. The den was upholstered in puffs and brave with the steins and posters whereby one knew it for a den. Stanislarni's first performance—even before he let himself be awed by the finery—was to work out the geography of the house and prove that the den opened directly from the hall. His host had taken him through the other rooms to show they existed. Stanislarni liked that. It was what he would have done himself.

"I guess he should be a Jew," Stanislarni told Stanislarni, while accepting one of the cigarettes that were

shoved his way. He was then asked, "Why you get statistics? Working on some newspaper?"

"No. I don't work no place today. I wanted to find out how such nice houses was had. I wanted to know if all the fellers had 'em was American-born."

"You American-born?"

"No. I was four when mamma came from Poland. My brother was born on ship."

"So? Polish?" He was so very mildly interested that Stanislarni at once reconstructed his ideas and told himself, "Russian he is, I bet me a cent."

The fat man now leaned back in a massive arm-chair and assumed the air of a magistrate examining witnesses in an intricate civil case.

"So, my young friend, you admire this beautiful suburb? And maybe you think sometime you'd like to come here to live yourself? Well, it ain't easy. For one not American-born—oh, it ain't easy. And more specially for Polanders it ain't easy."

Stanislarni dovetailed this expert opinion to the lesson of doorplates and felt condemned. His entertainer went on, "To be sure, some us folks in this neighborhood ain't always had it so nice. We're what they call self-made. Now me, myself—say, how old be you?"

"Seventeen," replied Stanislarni, for once determined to indulge himself in the luxury of the truth.

"Oh!" The other pulled out a watch and stared it in the face.

Stanislarni could take a hint, even though appearing stodgy. In fact he generally took hints most quickly when most stodgy.

"Seventeen years from Poland," he said, helping himself to a second smoke.

"Oh—that's it. And you were four then? Voted yet?"

"No."

"Father took out his papers? Is it this ward he lives in?"

"He lives to West Holly," said Stanislarni, shortly. "I wasn't talking about him."

The gentleman rose, tiptoed to a letter-press, opened a slide, and disclosed beer bottles cuddling round an ice cake.

"It's early," he said, "but—prosit!"

"He's a dam' Dutchman," thought Stanislarni, while getting tangled in a stein lid and defying any onlooker to grin.

"At your age—it is to laugh—I was peddling garden truck. Before that I sold papers. I have even shined shoes."

It is impossible for mere words to show how proud he was of all this. That he actually swelled with pride is proven by his suddenly unbuttoning his waistcoat, though Stanislarni thought a silk shirt had something to do with it. He went on, "Of course that wasn't so much. Any fool can push a pushcart. The thing is to know when to get out. Like in the stock market. I always knew when to get out. I knew it when I wove jute at so much the cut or when I did janitor's work with a third-class license. After a while I got out of business and took up politics. Ran last year for common council. Excuse me—there's the 'phone."

He closed the Circassian walnut door, leaving Stanis-

larni a few moments with the glory that was from boot-blackening, the grandeur founded in truck-peddling. Stanislarni meditatively counted the cigarettes and put a few in his pocket.

"Stucked on yourself, you is," he remarked to an enlarged crayon portrait of his host, "just like a darn Swede."

The citizen of the world came back, almost breathless.

"Call from the mayor," he said, with a hard look that defied a listener to think otherwise. "Him and me is rather pals. You see, our grandfathers"—he paused for effect—"came to this country the same time."

Stanislarni understood. His spirits, that had quickened when he heard of boot-blackening and coal-shoveling, tumbled below their usual level. All guesses as to nationality had been wrong. This was a real American (with an Irish name, Stanislarni knew enough of politics to be sure he had an Irish name) with a mayor for a friend.

"I got to be at the C. H. in half an hour," the other went on. "Want to ride to the city in my car?"

"No," said Stanislarni, with a smile that expressed that pathetic Polish proverb, "Always you can hear the tears in their laughter." All this had got him nowhere. He thought he would go back and be humble to the boss. "Thank you, mister, for the pleasant hour," he went on. "I just remembered it's most ten, and my job she starts at seven. Goo'by."

"Here, don't go off mad. I'd like to help you, honest I would. I always like to help young fellers with ambition. But we can't all be at the top, you know. One thing, I have education. I wasn't anywhere and wouldn't have got anywhere, only I got educated. That's what

this country requires—education. Lookit President Wilson—Taft—Roosevelt—where they been without education? Or the mayor o' Boston? He's even been in jail. Now most fellers been in jail would know they couldn't be mayor and let it go at that. He didn't. Hired a man to go round with him to caucuses and such and ask every time 'How about that jail sentence?' Give Mr. Candidate a swell chance to answer back, 'I done it for a friend.' And what he done was take an examination, so you may say it's education put him in the mayor's chair. Now I take it you ain't much education?"

Stanislarni shook his head gloomily, fearing to even mention District Seven of West Holly.

"And Polish-born besides. My boy, if you got a decent job, believe me, you better stick to it. Why, it was some horrible effort I made before I got that——" he pointed triumphantly to a beribboned sheepskin that hung over the humidor. "One time I had all the Y.M.C.A. betting I wouldn't make it."

Stanislarni went out properly subdued and his entertainer saw him go, and then called up a grin. He always held out helping hands to young men with votes—present or potential—but he didn't encourage them in aspirations to his own eminence. He was tickled at sending that youth forth satisfactorily burning with envy and hopelessness.

All went well until the depressed Stanislarni turned to make sure the door was fast closed. He saw a silver plate polished to the last degree.

Taddeous Wajakalowski

"By God!" Stanislarni informed the surrounding atmosphere. "He is a dam' Polisher all the time!"

He rang the bell with assurance, walked over the answering maid, and slapped into the den, where Mr. Wajakalowski was trying to decide which of two motor-ing caps was the most knowing.

"Hullo, Mr. Wajakalowski," said Stanislarni, ripping the top off a beer bottle and letting the contents gurgle into his stein. "You see, I comed back. I didn't know when your grandpa and the mayor's got to this country same time it was in different ships. Now I want you please to tell me all you did, beginning with next first from the jute mill. So far, you see, I already got."

Mr. Wajakalowski made a gesture of despair.

"Would you go to college? Why, you don't know the beginning of the entrance requirements."

"Yah," said Stanislarni, rudely swilling beer. "You shall tell me. That Y.M.C.A. did you say helped you to know how? Then it shall help me. And anyhow, mister, I thinks I ain't so foolish. I thinks even now I talk better as you. 'I done it for a friend.' Mayors never says so. What else you do besides Y.M.C.A.?"

Mr. Wajakalowski cowered behind his mahogany flat desk. At length he ventured to say, humbly, "I got married. It's a good thing to be married young. Keeps a feller from going out evenings spending money."

Stanislarni slammed down the stein and made a second exit, which he diversified by yanking aside a portière and gaping into the living-room, where a little girl was playing the piano with marvelous skill (and her feet).

"Too much blue eyes," said Stanislarni, and banged his way into the street. It was half an hour before Mr.

Wajakalowski understood that his youngest daughter had been considered as a possible wife and summarily rejected.

By then Stanislarni was out in Holly. Soon after he started on a five-mile tramp to his father's farm.

Kani Natupski was found, as generally, adoring his swine. By constant and pertinacious attention he had reared a monumental sow and in her whereabouts he always was when not asleep or slave-driving the family. He stopped smiling at the pig and frowned at his big son.

"What's doing?" he asked. "You on strike?"

"I've quit," said Stanislarni.

"Good nuf," returned the father, who always preferred his children should work directly under his eye and lash. "Start cutting hay next week. Good nuf."

Stanislarni went directly to the point.

"Where's my money-book?" he asked.

"Oh, she safe. In pocket belt like mine."

"Le's see it."

"Me too busy," grumbled the father, and scratched the pig. A pause ensued. Then, "I want to see my money-book," said Stanislarni, as if the matter hadn't been mentioned before.

His father walked away. Stanislarni patiently followed. Kani led his son all over the farm and into the barn, Stanislarni calmly sauntering after and at intervals giving reminder that he was waiting around to see the money(*i.e.*, bank)-book. He had been through this part of it before. The real fight would come if he declined to return the book. Kani finally drifted back to the pig-pen, there being nowhere else to go, and reluctantly drew out the book.

"All ri," said Stanislarni, and quickly hid the precious possession inside his clothes. Then Kani forgot the pig for an instant, and cursed inadequately in English, more satisfactorily in his native tongue.

"Spender," he bawled, "anyhow the moneys you can't get. The bank man he will not give it."

Stanislarni stopped so suddenly one foot remained in the air.

"Dam'," he muttered to himself. He knew what his father said was true. Kani had gone with him when he made his first deposit, after working a month in the mill. The bank people had carefully explained to the man and boy such terms as "under age" and "guardian." Everything began to look black once more, just as when he made his first exit from the Wajakalowski mansion. Kani was tuggingly vigorously at his son, endeavoring to extract the book as one pried potatoes from rocky soil. Then a bright light illumined Stanislarni's vision and he gave his father a push and surged onward. As he went he shouted, "The cash-money's all mine. The man said it was when I was twenty-one."

"Fool!" bawled the father. "You be seventeen."

And Stanislarni holloaed back, "Nix. I'm twenty-one. A paper to the Mifflin Manufacturing Associates' office says so."

Kani stood bewildered, making rapid calculations on his fingers. He had, to be sure, sworn before somebody that his oldest son was seventeen four years before, but—but—how could that have been when Stanislarni was his oldest child and Marinki and he married at sixteen and nineteen? Kani almost determined to monkey no more with American laws.

Stanislarni, assured as to his career on the financial side, next attacked the Y.M.C.A. He found Mr. Steel of that organization on guard.

"I've come——" said the boy.

Mr. Steel saw the rough clothes and unpolished boots, and said "Employment Bureau next door."

"T'anks. I've come——"

"Gymnasium registration this evening."

"Is it? I've come——"

"Excuse me, I'm very busy. Can you call some other——"

"No," growled Stanislarni. "I've come today and I can't come no more. I'm going on from here."

Mr. Steel did then stop his important work—he was plotting a circular to interest exactly such boys as Stanislarni in the work of the association—and looked up.

"Oh—what d'ye want?" he asked, fatuously.

"What college does presidents go to?"

"I—I don't quite understand."

"A feller—a man he told me all presidents went to college. Which one?"

"Why—er, Mr. Taft went to Yale. And Roosevelt, Harvard——"

"That's the one," exploded Stanislarni, bringing down his fist till the ink bottles jumped. "I go to Harvard. Tell me how."

Mr. Steel was interested at once. He called to other departments and when he got the men in he showed them the boy who wanted to go to Harvard. Some of them were men who had been, and they thought it specially funny. Only one youth, an extra gym instructor who was trying to worm his way into an institution of higher

culture—any institution of higher culture that would let him work as he studied—did sit down and talk.

“At school?” he asked.

“Not now. Vacation,” said Stanislarni, calmly.

“Oh—h! Well, I suppose you know it’s darn hard to pass the entrance exams.”

“I know it,” said Stanislarni. “I buy books and pretty soon I know it all.”

“Gosh, ’tain’t simple as that. If you weren’t to a prep school you got to have tutors and all sorts of fancy training. Then there’s the kale. That’s what stumps me. I’m so long earning fifty dollars ahead that I spend a hundred while I’m at it.”

“Oh—money,” said Stanislarni, with a sweep of the hand. “She don’t hurt me none. How much it cost—this college?”

“One can scrape through on five hundred a year. Less if he tends a furnace. But where’s the five hundred?”

“How much you take,” asked Stanislarni, “to show me those books?”

Cupidity gleamed in the poor rat’s eye; he named a dollar an hour, expecting to be beaten down.

“Come, begin,” said Stanislarni, “I got no time for fooling.”

And tendered the dollar forthwith.

The lad felt he was robbing the poor fathead, but because he saw a good supper in that dollar he accepted it. Mr. Steel grinned when he saw the two walking off, and made a crack anent the blind leading the blind.

For three weeks the rat—his name was Ralph Browning—’phoned excuses and did not come to work. Then

he sent word that he gave up the position, "having secured a steady one, more lucrative."

He had indeed, its name being Stanislarni Natupski. His teachers in District Seven would not have remembered the boy as an especial glutton for learning, but that was probably because books then seemed to get you nowhere. Ralph Browning's nose was now seldom far from the grindstone, and it was not until spring that he reappeared at the Y.M.C.A., hollow-eyed, but alert. No circular being imminent at that season, Mr. Steel was talkative.

"Haven't seen you since you walked off with the immigrant boy. By the way, Mr. Blanchard of the night school tells me you've sent for the past performance exam. queries."

"Yes," said Browning, "and I wish you'd ask him to look over these answers."

"Ask him yourself. Here he comes."

Browning whistled under his breath out of the window while Mr. Blanchard bent a quizzical brow over the papers. Soon he said, "This isn't your hand?"

"No. It's another fellow who's making this try."

After a while Mr. Blanchard straightened, and spun his glasses on their cord.

"It's a good test," he said, "but a queer one. Many quite easy questions aren't answered at all, while some difficult ones are taken flying. The odd part of it is that there's absolutely no incorrect answer. What the man knows he is sure of—unless he worked unfairly. This isn't a hoax, Browning?"

"No, indeed," said Browning. "It's—say, Mr. Steel, you remember the Polish boy? Well, these are his

papers, and that's what he's learned since last summer, with my assistance. And I don't know if he's a real man or some automatic thing an Edison guy made out of the memory the rest of us have missed. I read him a thing and it seems to be his for keeps. That's how his answers are so straight, when he makes 'em at all."

"Not like the most of you, who know so many things that aren't so," snapped Mr. Blanchard.

"But the thing is—does he know enough to get into Harvard?"

"He can be stuffed," said Mr. Blanchard. "The examinations aren't until May. And then there's the summer to work off conditions. A marvelous memory! But I suppose he has no reasoning power and no money?"

"Can't say as to the first," laughed Browning, "but I think he's not poor. Every time I suggest an hour off he shells out a dollar. But I'm glad you'll take him over. He's given me the willies."

It was characteristic of Stanislarni that except for an occasional picture postal he held no communication with his home in West Holly. Neither did he buy new clothes, attend moving-picture shows, or always take off his boots when he went to bed. His mind was concentrated wholly on the business in hand. By and by, when going to college did for him what it had apparently done for Mr. Wajakalowski, he intended to have all his little sisters live in his fine house and play pianos with their feet.

And so it came to the important week in May and Stanislarni Natupski sat in a room at Harvard and wrote answers to queries with such rapidity that he had plenty of leisure to gape about and wonder why the men in

charge gave him such sour looks if they happened to pass in patrol.

Stanislarni was truly a marked figure, with his huge bullet head; besides he seemed idle so much of the time that the examiners could but suspect he had introduced some new and devilish method of dishonesty.

Stanislarni, cursed with neither imagination nor conscience, sat serene and unworried. He thought he saw straight before him three years of scenes such as this many times repeated, and if his clothes wore out in the meantime he supposed he could buy a strong suit for five dollars in Boston just as he had done at Cohen's We Clothe the World in Mifflin Grove. The fact that he had two thousand dollars ahead by no means incited him to any extravagance.

While Stanislarni tried to fill in half an hour with entertainment of a roving eye he saw that the young gentleman next him—who was yet far enough away to make "communication" difficult, if not dangerous—was deeply and frequently interested in his shirt cuff. No one having put the Polish boy wise as to these aids in available information, Stanislarni stared in such undisguised wonder that the youth blushed, wriggled in his chair, and exhibited an illness at ease which Stanislarni understood not in the least, and so could not know that his inconvenient espionage, added to that of the regular literary police, was driving a fellow-student nearly frantic.

That afternoon a thunderstorm came up with peculiar swiftness and in the darkest moment, while an obstinate electric switch was being negotiated at the farthest end of the room, Stanislarni saw the other student slip a tiny

book under the table edge. In an instant Stanislarni had darted from his seat and placed a grip of iron on the volume, while in a whisper he hissed, "Fool!"

The lights came up, the book disappeared, and Stanislarni Natupski was caught standing. An anxious moment ensued, then allowance was made for lightning acting on youthful nerves, and the boy was told, "Take your seat, sir."

At the day's end the other youth waited for Stanislarni to lope out into the lilac-scented air.

"I say," he said, "you're a good sort, keeping a still tongue that way. I really thought you were going to bawl me out."

"Here's your book," said Stanislarni. As he held it out hidden by his huge hand the cover flew back and an otherwise blank page showed the volume belonged to Arthur Slocumb.

"I guess you know me," said Stanislarni. "Me and you had a club once at West Holly. You gave my sister teeth-brushes."

"Sure," cried Arthur. "You're Stanislarni Natupski. And you're going to college!"

Both boys grinned and began to walk away very fast to wherever they were going. Where that was neither had any idea. In a moment Arthur resumed talking. "Say, this is great stuff. Just to think that the little club I cooked up that summer I was so bored at the farm should result in your being at Harvard with me!" Stanislarni nodded and forbore to mention what had really incited him to such intellectual effort. Arthur prattled on, "Now I can put you wise to a whole lot of things."

"Yes," said Stanislarni. "I don't know much—just what a Y.M.C.A. feller showed me."

Arthur stopped and took a general survey of his companion.

"Shoes—rotten! Socks—degenerate! Trousers—impossible! Shirt—a nightmare! Tie—a blizzard! What a pity you're St. Bernard size while I'm in the Collie class."

"What's matter?" asked Stanislarni. "I got this necktie off a feller in the mill two years ago, but if you want I should buy another I can do it. I got two thousand dollars in my kick."

Arthur turned faint, dropped his chin, and forgot to pick it up. Stanislarni went on, "And maybe I can put you wise to somepin, too. So don't take no more books to the examinations. I tells you the right numbers—so—with my fingers under the table when the man he ain't looking."

"Oh, thank you," said Arthur, meekly. "I thought when you called me fool just now it meant you had Sunday-school ideas from the Y.M.C.A."

"I said fool and fool you was," sneered Stanislarni, "because the right answer ain't in this book at all. It's in t'other volume, page 88."

The boys passed, with slight conditions which both felt sure would be safely worked off. Arthur soon brought Stanislarni to recognition of the nail-buffer and its uses; Stanislarni patted himself pridefully and was prepared to tell any multitude that should by and by elevate him to an office, "I did it—I did it for a friend."

II

EVERYBODY'S DAUGHTER AND MY SON

WAJEICEH NATUPSKI was a pickle. All and sundry were agreed as to that.

During Wajeiceh's schooldays there was a great deal of talk in home kitchens about "associates." A boy might be made or ruined by his associates. It was a pity that District Seven had been invaded by foreigners and state kids. The proper thing was to frown on all coasting frolics and ball nines that included these elements.

"It won't be very much to your advantage," a mother would say, severely, while administering to her offspring with caraway cookies, "to be seen going round with that Polish boy."

Thus the Polish boy and the state kid were thrown into each other's society, and by mutually marking time arrived simultaneously at their fifteenth year and the ninth grade.

"Won't get us into their old High School," they told each other with the air of having escaped a dire peril.

The state kid was named Shaum Kelly. He had been placed in West Holly after a lurid childhood divided between slums and institutions. According to him the slums were pleasant, but foodless; the institutions hotbeds of vice.

Wajeiceh and Shaum constructed a hangout in the

Bowes woods, making a tent of stolen bedquilts slung over interwoven grapevines. West Holly, which calmly accepted this friendship, would have rubbed its eyes had it seen who was often with them in his grandfather's woods. Frank Seymour, only child of a widow, who had come to the Bowes mansion to eke out her small income. Frank, with blue eyes and curled hair in a crest, might have been galvanized from the frontispiece of some little blue-and-gold book called "Orphan Willy." Search out such a book. You will see the frontispiece had no chin. Neither had Frank.

Wajeiceh and Shaum considered Frank the greatest pal that ever happened. He furnished the ideas for the three. Of course he was booked for the Academy, but what should the others do now they had so cleverly escaped High School?

"I got to work for my father," said Wajeiceh, with the gloom appropriate to such a sickening announcement, "till I'm twenty-one. Then I guess I'll strike. Gee, he'll be mad!"

"Hell of a time to wait," said Frank, who introduced the profanity. "Why don't you read the riot act now?"

"Ouch!" said Wajeiceh, and wriggled at the assured result.

"If any man laid hands on me," said Frank, "I'd run away."

Glorious idea! Shaum took it up at once, being an expert in running away. "Come on," he cried, "let's do it. Let's all do it. Let's go to the city. And when I say city it's the real city I do be meaning—not Mifflin Grove."

He spoke from splendid recollections, when policemen had plucked him starving from gratings over warm restaurant kitchens.

Frank was now happy. The others had been induced to lead him into temptation. He prepared to fall.

"Listen," he said. "I'll put you wise to lifting some stuff at the house and we'll go to the city. There we'll live easy. Real cigarettes and beer—not this sweet-fern thing at all."

Animated by this description the hangout was solemnly demolished. The quilts, wrapped around stones, were sunk in the nighest pond, there to rise and give West Holly women awful shocks as they recognized the Flying Goose or Love in Eden patterns missing since years ago from the clothes line. Wajeiceh, be it remembered, was a pickle! Yet his imagination did not now dictate any exploit more criminal than taking a pie from Nancy Slocumb's pantry window. Frank's soared to brilliant heights.

"I say," he whispered, at the rendezvous, down the road a piece from the Bowes mansion, "who's barefooted?"

Wajeiceh was thriftily carrying his only shoes.

"Slip over the piaz and in that open window. There's a bill-book on the slide of the desk. I got to have it. Dassent go myself because the folks in the next room might hear me and wonder why I was out of bed. There's no light except where they are."

Wajeiceh did not realize that this book held Mr. Blanchard Bowes' profits of a week's peach sales, and that it would mean something serious to be caught. He

did the trick. Mr. Bowes, dozing in the dark, afterward remembered a moving shadow that seemed more substantial than anything in a dream.

"Good," said Frank, pocketing the money and tossing the book into the bushes with highwaymanish ease. At Holly depot he bought tickets for Boston, though the other two thought something adventurous and economical might be done with a freight train.

"Supposed you fellows were out for living easy," quoth Frank, pumping change into a slot-machine.

The journey was uneventful except for the brilliant moment when Frank tipped the brakeman twenty-five cents for a pillow. Wajeiceh could not sleep for thinking of it. "Easy come, easy go," said the gallant receiver of stolen goods.

In the early morning the boys stood at the entrance of the passenger station. That city, destined to give them an easy living, was waking up. A tall boy with a single leg arranged papers in the safety island of the square. Other boys swept walks. One came out of a restaurant and slapped on the glass a sign reading "Combination breakfast thirty cents." It was so new that the purple fluid ran over last night's signs, oatmeal and eggs putting welsh rabbit in the discard.

The wandering senses of the boys were brought to a focus by a loud question, "Who wants to carry these cases?"

An obvious drummer had taken two heavy pieces of luggage from a red-capped porter. Shaum, once of the city, understood. This pirate would expect you to lug that business all over town for a dollar and lunch money. "Nothing doing," said Shaum airily and turned away.

Frank was insulted. He, grandson of "Peach Orchard" Bowes, a luggage carrier!

"Hire a taxi," said he, "they're only four dollars an hour."

The man laughed and staggered off.

"What about eats?" asked Shaum, whose stomach had become used to nourishing food at regular intervals in the West Holly home where a paternal state had placed him.

Frank drew a hand from either pocket—empty!

"I've been frisked!" he said glibly. He savored the situation. It was almost as if he read about it in paper covers. Then he caught Wajeiceh's look of consternation, followed by a quick "See you tonight, right here," before the Polish boy was up the street in pursuit of the drummer, whom he caught changing hands.

"I'd like the job, mister," he volunteered, but it was not so easily obtained.

"Um," remarked the man, "what's the matter with that light-complected chap? He looked honest."

Wajeiceh stood in open-mouthed dismay. His bad reputation seemed to have followed him to the city. "I'm awful strong," was the best he could offer, and when he did get the job it was for the dollar minus the meal.

"Hurry up, splay-foot!" was his greeting from Shaum that evening at the place of meeting. "We got a dandy room. Rent? The old woman didn't ask for it in advance. She said Frank looked honest."

The boy who looked honest was laid across the bed, with his feet on a pillow. "This is the life," he observed, wrenching the top from a beer bottle.

"Fool, you," was Shaum's comment on Wajeiceh's first day in the city. "Padded the hoof and blistered the two hands of you, and for what?"

Wajeiceh laid the dollar bill on the bureau. The others regarded it with proper scorn. Work ten hours for that! Work!

Nevertheless they were quite willing it should pay for three suppers.

The landlady seemed to have borrowed the drummer's spectacles. "That Polander your chum?" she asked the angel-faced Frank next morning.

"I'm helping him out a bit," said Frank, jingling the coins remaining from Wajeiceh's earnings.

"Take my advice, don't trust him. He's got a bad face," said the woman, and went on working with the feather duster, flirting dirt from one piece of furniture and leaving it to settle on another.

After coffee and sinkers Wajeiceh proposed visiting a place which he had discovered the day before, where "Help Wanted" advertisements could be read on big cards, but "Who wants to be reading 'em?" Shaum wanted to know, and Frank said, "You keep forgetting we came to the city to live easy."

Wajeiceh was very grateful for this kind reminder, but a few hours spent in eating nothing reconciled the others to the Polish boy's seeking a job. He became one of a "crew" that went about belawnded suburbs ringing doorbells and distributing samples of something nobody wanted. A man waited at the head of the street and saw that no house was neglected, not even those approached by thirty-eight steps. Each evening he assembled his assistants on a corner, where there was a flat-

topped fence, and paid off. You were expected to show up next day. If you didn't he cursed and put another ad. in the want column.

Wajeiceh grew footsore and haggard, also dirty. One evening Shaum went out and did not return. "Gee, I shall miss Shaum," was Frank's comment, "I shall be alone all day." Wajeiceh, slopping about in mangled shoes, wherein cardboard inner soles alone kept his toes from the pavement, was haunted by a picture of Frank alone all day. Tired as he would be, he pinched himself awake evenings to listen while Frank talked. Frank was a very good talker, but Wajeiceh was always cruelly sleepy. Then, too, he had to be up early to provide Frank with daily cigarettes. Frank said it wasn't worth while for him to get up. Just as soon as he got up he would begin eating breakfast and that would be a nice state of affairs.

"It ain't so bad, being alone all day," was his comment after a week had passed and Shaum failed to return. "Besides, more eats for little Frankie—and you."

Wajeiceh was very grateful for this recognition of his needs, though he still ate much less than he wanted. He had been used to something approaching it at papa's in West Holly. He still deceived himself with the idea that he was living easy. He wished he could get a better job, so that Frank might have more to spend. It was pretty bum, being right in the city, where were all sorts of shows, and short of coin. Nor was Wajeiceh devoid of ambition. He believed he could command a "crew" himself if he had a decent rig. Frank licked his lips. A boss got twelve dollars a week. Lots of spending in twelve dollars. He proposed Wajeiceh should put on

what of his would fit. And—say—here's ten cents. Get your pants pressed!

Wajeiceh, meekly accepting a dime of his own money, paid unconscious tribute to the dignity that attends those who live easy. Pretty well turned out he went after the better job, animated by the desire to have a larger sum for slipping Frank.

Was he a dupe? He was still a little bewildered at being admitted to the friendship of Blanchard Bowes's grandson. He lacked the self-reliance of his brother Stanislarni, who at this very time was completing his freshman year at college with a record of "making good," in the face of more than common obstacles. Stanislarni owed a great deal to his American chum, too; but he had not chosen a Frank Seymour. Arthur Slocumb would never have made a pretty frontispiece, but he had a chin.

During Wajeiceh's temporary absence Blanchard Bowes arrived at the furnished room. He had been delayed in tracing the boy by Mrs. Seymour's frantic refusals to have him looked for anywhere except in hospitals and morgues, but the return of Shaum Kelly to West Holly had helped a great deal.

Frank was discovered living easy in trousers and undershirt.

"How's this?" said Mr. Bowes. "Where are your shoes?"

"Worn out, poor darling, on the cruel pavements," sobbed his mother. "We must buy a pair at once. Six D with a box toe. I always pay seven dollars."

Grandfather stirred not. "Where's the rest of your

suit?" he asked, hard as when he was extolling a carload of seconds in the open market.

Mother knew. "Pawned!" she shrieked. "To keep from starvation. Oh, hurry to a drug store for beef extract. You have pawned it?"

"Not exactly," murmured Frank. The old man was looking at the still smoking stubs in the ash tray, and getting ready to disbelieve any hard-luck story. So Frank told the truth. He had loaned his clothes to another fellow, so the other fellow might get a job.

"Dear, unselfish boy!" yelled Mrs. Seymour, and Blanchard Bowes acknowledged she was right. Yes, though the borrower was the impossible Natupski.

"Your evil genius, sweetheart," moaned Mrs. Seymour. "We know it all—how he stole grandfather's money and Mrs. Perkins's only bedquilt pieced by her dead sister in turkey red. I suppose you stopped here with him to save him from ruin in this awful city. Now we will take you home and send you to a military academy at Peekskill. Your grandfather says all letters you write must be supervised, but you can put any special message under the stamp and I'll never fail to look."

Mrs. Seymour and her recovered jewel rode in the parlor car. Mr. Bowes took stern charge of the Natupski culprit in the smoker. Kani Natupski was in waiting. Mr. Bowes handed over the boy as to the keeper of a prison van.

"Here he is," said the exasperated grandfather. "Better give him a licking he'll remember."

"Sure," replied Mr. Natupski. "Leaving right in time to make hay. You lick yours, too?"

"Well, I'm afraid I can't," was the reply. "His

mother don't think he was to blame. 'Twas your boy led him into it."

West Holly was of the same opinion, to a woman. "You see what happens," they said, "to any boy who goes around with a Natupski."

II

After his artistic beating, the story of which was long prominent in West Holly horrors, Wajeiceh remained immured in fertilizers, obscured by haystacks and fat swine, for over a year. Then, considering him cured of his propensity to wild oats, his father gave him a dime and let him go to cattle show. It was a very wee cattle show, held at Holly Centre in a cheerful spot bounded on two sides by the graveyard. One would not suppose a boy could get into mischief there. He might only waste a nickel bucking the knife game, or tire himself at weight-lifting more than he would by a day in the harvest field. Ah, but this is reckoning without girls!

Wajeiceh had never noticed girls before this day. At fifteen minutes past two he was considering whether he should spend his dime on the three-legged calf or his stomach. At 2:25 he was inviting Harriott Bruill to have an ice-cream cone. Harriott should have accepted, because it was the only "attention" she was to receive all day. Harriott was an ordinary girl, with freckles; not hair enough for the style, but clever at eking it out with ribbon; a blue muslin blouse, and a string of beads. She was always fingering the beads. Her hands were pretty, white, and bloodless. They were very different from Natupski hands. Wajeiceh knew her slightly—she had

been to District Seven "off and on" while visiting her grandmother, old Mercy Bruill.

"Oh, I guess not," she said, but never offered to move from before the stand where the cones were displayed.

"Come on—please," said Wajeiceh. He had wild visions of a halcyon afternoon, spent walking beside Harriott to every point of interest on the grounds.

He ordered the cones prepared and held one out, enticing in pink and brown. Harriott wanted it. The day was sultry, she was thirsty, and she wanted it. She also wanted a beau. She had never had one, and the fact was against her at home. "I was wrong to let your grandmother call you Harriott," her mother had been known to say. "It's a regular old maid's name."

But—to go with a Natupski! to meet other girls and see their first look of ardent envy turn to one of derision.

"I guess I mustn't stay," she mumbled, and as she turned Wajeiceh's rejected offering was thrown into the Midway mud. He stood aghast, glaring at the pink ruin which stood for so much loss. Turned down! In the face of multitudes, turned down! Two other girls who had been watching, asked each other with exquisite sarcasm, "Did you ever get left?"

Wajeiceh had as soon proffered his nickel's worth to either as to Harriott. He was yearning for zest in life. If those girls had let him walk about with them, had allowed him to play a few games of croquet in their door-yards, had invited him to a "promenade concert" in the winter, they would have done all the missionarying required of a pretty girl. A capital opportunity for civic

improvement was lost that autumn afternoon when Harriott turned away and Phoebe and Beulah laughed.

Wajeiceh flung the other cone at Harriott. It landed splash between her shoulders. The two, while scraping off ice-cream and quieting Harriott's convulsive sobs, congratulated her on having shown the Polish scum its place. Phoebe and Beulah believed, because their parents had told them so, that we could sell farms to Natupskis, go to school with Natupskis, naturalize Natupskis (male) and count their votes town meeting day, and all the while keep Natupskis at arm's length socially.

Wajeiceh was a festering sore on youthful Holly. Not being cured, he became offensive.

The next time his father gave him a day off he went to Mifflin Grove and walked three times round the railroad station. A very pretty girl with pink cheeks smiled at him. Wajeiceh's eyes were dulled by following furrows; he felt flattered, and smiled back.

"Looking for a friend?" she asked. "So'm I. Did you ever get left?"

Wajeiceh could now grin at the phrase. Maisy—she said her name was Maisy—took his arm openly and led him into the street. She had come to Mifflin, she declared, on a visit, but there was no one to meet her. She'd just go in a booth and 'phone and then he could take her anywhere he wished. Had he a nickel handy?

His father having given him a whole quarter of a dollar, he had. Afterward they sat an hour in the park. The things she asked him to buy before the hour was up! Wajeiceh didn't fancy this line of talk, as it reminded him constantly that he had no money, but he

was very happy sitting by Maisy's side. Several West Holly people passed by and saw him.

When he went away Maisy reminded him she would be in the same place the next Saturday afternoon. Wajeiceh didn't think he would meet her then, because his revenge on Holly was already complete. He'd got a girl! He'd shown 'em. But back in West Holly, mixing mortar—Kani Natupski was setting the neighborhood an example in the shape of a cement milk cooler—he kept telling himself that Maisy would be in the same place next Saturday afternoon. He wondered if she would wear the same clothes and if one of her cheeks was always redder than the other. And he thought he would ask her why she drew little lines about her eyes.

It seemed to be settled that he would meet her Saturday afternoon, and she did not appear surprised to see him. He asked about the eyes.

"What d'ye make pictures of black lines about 'em for?" he blurted out. He didn't care if she was peeved. Harriott Bruill and the girls of Holly had it in their power to make him wretched or happy on the turn of a word, but Maisy was powerless. She was also shameless.

"Why, to make my eyes look big, stupid!" she exclaimed, and beamed under her lacy hat brim.

Wajeiceh was not impressed. "Big eyes, glutton," he observed, remembering the old country proverb often employed by his father to repress the family appetite.

"You've got big eyes," pouted Maisy, in her best wise wax-doll manner, and "There you have it," returned Wajeiceh, waving his hand.

Quite suddenly Maisy began to cry. She owed her landlady, she confessed, and was miserable about it. "I

didn't da'st go home last night till ever so late," she whispered. "I walked the streets in all the rain—and thin shoes——"

She showed her shoes to prove it. They were thin, but bore no indication of having been out in the rain. Wajeiceh knew something of thin shoes himself, from his attempt to live easy in Boston, and emptied his pocket on Maisy's lap. She invited him to come and see the bill lifted, but he said in consternation, "I don't care what the dump's like."

To fill in the idle time Maisy began to abuse home-sheltered girls who weren't obliged to live in furnished rooms. Wajeiceh should have learned about Harriott, Beulah, and Phoebe from direct association; that being impossible he began to despise them on the false valuation of a painted sister.

"High schoolers are the limit," Maisy declared, "and even the ladies' magazines write 'em up." Which she proved by a news-stand. "Their lady mothers go to Daughters of Evolution, and the girls do just what they like. Lookit, a boy told me he knew a drug store sold more dope to Mifflin High than any street in N'York."

Wajeiceh went home in a hurry, with a bad taste in his mouth, but the story stung. Could it be true those dainty girls were as Maisy had described them? He wished he could find out. But he would want to kill himself if she was right.

A picnic impended in Rivers' Grove, and Wajeiceh got permission to go. It was announced as a "Get Together" picnic, and all the Hollys would be represented. Great tables were being built under the trees, and plank seats arranged alongside. The combined ministerial

force of the three villages would invoke a divine blessing on the gathering.

Wajeiceh, with boyish faith in words, believed it would be a "get together" picnic. He thought somebody there would have a word of friendship for a Natupski. He was rather tired of meeting Maisy, and some instinct told him she would not enjoy the picnic.

"I won't take her," he told himself. "I'll just take sardines."

He had more money than usual just then, having helped Abner Slocumb build a cement well curb in an occasional hour when he would otherwise have rested. He bought all the sardines the grocer at Holly Centre had in stock. He even remembered lemons and a knife.

In the wake of the post-office clerk, the bookkeepers from the paper mill, the butcher, and numerous young farmers Wajeiceh drifted into the grove. Girls in white muslin were setting the table. Wajeiceh dumped his tin boxes at one end of the festive board, making a lemon pyramid nearby.

Soon Tom Newell, who had bugled in training camps, gave them "taps," and they, not knowing it was inappropriate, sat down immediately. The blessings were asked, and then, "Oh, we have sardines," was the general shout. "Somebody has brought sardines. Or were they sent by the grocer? No, not any ham sandwiches for me. Nor cornbeef. I dote on sardines. Never had enough sardines in all my born days."

The little fishes went up and down the board, which became liberally oiled with splashings. The Methodist minister took his on crackers. The Congregationalist preferred his in a bread sandwich, with lemon. Others

grabbed them by the tails and devoured them as cats do mice, starting at the head. Blanchard Bowes alone skinned his and removed the backbone, thereby being half a box behind his neighbors.

Wajeiceh Natupski ate sandwiches when he could reach them. No one passed him anything. Every one wondered what he wanted there anyway, at a "get together" picnic. It was impossible to get together when fellows would push in whom it was desirable to keep out.

He spoke twice. To the man at his left he said, "Please pass the sardines." He didn't hear him. Later he asked the girl on his right, "What we going to do after supper?" She didn't hear him, either.

Presently the young people grouped themselves under the trees by the side of the pond and lifted their voices in song. Wajeiceh could sing as much as any one there, which wasn't much. When "There's a Little Spark of Love Still Burning" was started, he joined in. Five seconds later he was singing alone.

In a bitterness which he could feel, but not express, the boy hot-footed it to Mifflin Grove.

"What do you think?" buzzed the rural 'phones next day. "Whatever do you think? That dreadful Natupski scalawag went right straight from the picnic to a bar-room in Mifflin, and never came home till daylight. He looked dreadful peak-ed. He'll land in jail sure as fate."

Wajeiceh had found Maisy in the park. She told him she was hungry, and as he had not spent quite all his money supplying Holly with sardines, he took her to a place where they ate and drank.

Maisy seemed to feel like talking.

"Do you know," she said, "I like you, kid. I've a

darn good mind to get you drunk some night and marry you."

Wajeiceh, unwontedly stimulated by a pony of beer, almost wished she would. Perhaps the subsequent beating his father would give him might help him to forget the picnic in Rivers' Grove.

Maisy went on telling the story of her life. The rest of her name was Violet Gold. She told them it was Violet Gold when she went to work in the necktie factory after she left school. Her father had been a gold-beater before he was sent to the island. She had lived in Boston, on Amethyst Street.

"There was a guy . . . his name was Tom . . . some beef . . . he was always gassing about the happy day when he'd be raised to fourteen dollars. I was to have my own oil stove and he'd say how perf'ly lovely 't would be to come home and see me plastering onions on the skirt steak. . . . You got a look like him when you laugh. . . ."

"I ain't laughing now," said Wajeiceh, who believed every word.

"'Course not, 'cause I'm telling you a sad story. Well, was a night . . . hot! Me and Tom was on a street where was trees. Never been there before. Well, it was certainly some street. Make a corking education reel. Leaves, you know, showing their shapes on the sidewalk. And Tom says, 'Vi'let, let's get married.' Just like that! Well, I was under the influence. . . . I was going to say I would . . . but I looked up and there was a man. Well, he was a man. I'd seen him before. Knew I'd see him again. I wouldn't want to see him again every day, but some day I would want to

and he'd be right there. His kind is always right there."

She stopped and beckoned to a waiter. "I'm sick of ginger ale," she muttered. "Bring some Scotch and seltzer."

Wajeiceh couldn't see how the man knew what she meant.

The story was finished in a hurry. "I laughed in Tom's face. Felt fit to die that minute. Thought it was the green leaves on those trees made me do it. Because if I married Tom I wouldn't know nothing about frying steak. I'd want to be where the lights was bright. Tom was too good for that kind. He deserved a wife wasn't city-wise.

"So I met the one in the spats and the braid on the sides of his dress pants and the rest of the swell scenery. It was one grand summer. Say, come again on the Scotch and seltzer. I need it something fierce."

Wajeiceh had to assist her to the furnished room. They were pleasantly met by a suave landlady who did not in the least match Maisy's picture. He held the basin while the woman bathed Maisy's head. When she felt better the girl grabbed his sleeve and babbled a sequel to her story.

"Lookit. Come fall I went to that darn street again. My pumps was falling off my feet and I didn't have no underthings. It was down and out, and the leaves was brown. How many kinds of a fool was I? Tom didn't get no country goil. Didn't know no country goil. He went hell bent after one worse'n I ever thought of being. The lemonade was sour and I'd passed up the sugar once too often. And the leaves was brown. I'd done different

if I'd remembered the leaves—would—turn—brown.”

“Kind o' sickening, ain't it?” said the landlady to Wajeiceh. “But she's a cute little thing in the fore-noons, before she's been out. Comes into the kitchen and helps me with the wash as handy as can be. She knows how—went to work in a laundry soon as she left school.”

Wajeiceh dropped the basin and let Maisy's head fall. He had believed every word. He had compared himself with Maisy, and when he saw her shivering under the brown leaves he saw also Wajeiceh Natupski facing the adamant enfilade of that “get together” picnic. The girls of Holly had been hard as nails, so he had turned to Maisy. And Maisy had failed him. She was a liar. Were all girls hard as nails or liars?

“She told me it was a necktie factory,” was his bitter and inadequate explanation to the landlady. Then he tore from the house, purposely missed the last car, and drilled all the way to West Holly. Thus he arrived at sun-tip, after having talked his disgust to Virginia rail fences along the way.

Three weeks later there came a holiday commemorating the discovery of America. Wajeiceh had once “committed to memory” and declaimed, from the platform of District Seven, a part of the “Port of Ships”:

“ . . . *Adm'ral, say but one good word—
What shall we do when hope is gone?
The words leaped as a leaping sword:
“Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!”*

Wajeiceh wished he had never sailed on. He worked until mid-afternoon in the “underneath of the barn.”

His father was building new walls of cement. Wajeiceh had heard them say it would last longer than he would, growing harder all the time. He felt he was making a tomb.

Then Novia had to stick her head down and say, "Whaw, ain't it dark? And smells like graveyards."

Wajeiceh knew the sun was bright up in the great outdoors. It would be bright in Mifflin Grove. He threw down his trowel and ran for his other clothes, while his father was still in the woods marking trees. In due time he got to Mifflin. The park was full of girls—American girls, in kilted skirts and immaculate middies. Wajeiceh walked round and round, intoxicating himself with looking at them. He hankered for something clean—positively and entirely clean. He loved his mother and sisters, but they were dirt-colored. Even the park seemed new-scrubbed today in the dazzling October sunlight. A lawn mower had just passed over the grass, the odor of wilting blades made Wajeiceh sick. There had been just such an odor, of dying grass, when he had met Harriott. The flowers in the park glowed with hectic fire, as flowers do when frost is in the air.

Still Wajeiceh went round and round. Asters, the smell of new-mown hay, splashing fountains, a burst of music, laughing passersby, all told him it was a holiday and he was alone. Even boys shunned him. Old Frank had never sent him so much as a souvenir card. Of course a Blanchard Bowes grandson couldn't have remained always in Boston supported by a Natupski, but he had liked living easy while it lasted,

old Frank had. Now not so much as a card. Lots of others in West Holly had them, though.

In the glut of girls four girls were now noticeable.

First, Beulah, Phoebe, and Harriott.

Behind them, Maisy. Maisy in something bright and silky, with a few buttons off, because buttons off didn't matter if you had style.

Beulah, Phoebe, and Harriott shied like frightened colts and ran to a seat by the bandstand.

"Oh," gasped one, "did you see him?"

"He acted queer."

"They say he drinks."

"I thought he was going to speak."

"He wouldn't dare."

"He's talking to a dreadful girl."

"See—she's going into an awful place."

"Where?"

"That one, with the swinging doors."

"Hush, Harriott. You're green. We mustn't let on we know what that place is. It's a Place!"

"She's looking over her shoulder at him."

"And beckoning. The bold piece!"

"Just think, Harriott, how you'd be feeling if you'd eaten ice-cream with him that day at the fair."

Harriott sighed. "I suppose he'll end in the lockup," she whispered. "Mother said I only need wait a little to see what would happen to any girl who went round with a Natupski."

All three agreed he was lost, and went home to spread the story in Holly. But he was not lost. He had told Maisy, "So you worked in a laundry? And told me it was a necktie factory!"

Her nods and becks had no effect on him. He went back to his father's barn, took his licking, and resumed working in cement. With teeth set he determined he would yet make Holly respect him. And do it alone—no thanks to any girl—Beulah, Phoebe, Harriott! He didn't realize that he ought to thank Maisy.

III

MISS ANNIE S. NATUPSKI

THE spring she was sixteen 'Statia Natupski decided to "work out." The American inhabitants of West Holly considered that it was what might have been expected. Of course their daughters wouldn't work out. Their daughters were booked for situations as schoolma'ams, bookkeepers in the mills, or clerking in a store. But the American parents saw nothing peculiar in a Natupski working out, though as a matter of fact Kani Natupski could buy some of them twice over. He offered himself to the world as filthy and ignorant, and was taken at his own valuation. The Natupski children were looked upon as the banes of Miss Olive Greene's career as a teacher. Every winter she told at Hiram Farrar's how they were sewn up for the season, and every spring she hoped they would be ripped out long before it was reasonable to expect they would be.

So, when 'Statia announced she was going to Mrs. Sabrina Perkins's to "work out," the general feeling was only one of commiseration for Mrs. Perkins. And, after all, it was so difficult to keep any sort of help that perhaps Mrs. Perkins was not so much to be pitied. Gone forever were the good old days when at the docks you could grab off a green girl who was open to teaching because up to sailing she had done nothing but herd reindeer. Nowadays even the steerage passengers had

"taken D. S." in their own lands, demanded six dollars a week and got it.

— One beautiful spring day 'Statia wiped the hearth with the dishcloth, hung the glass towels on the roller ready for the hired man's face, and found a place for the frying pan in the china closet next the opalescent finger-bowls. She had now been sixteen weeks with Mrs. Perkins and felt all American housewifery at her command.

"I guess that looks pretty good," she muttered, as she pulled down the sleeves of her shirtwaist, and decorated the back of a dining-chair with her seersucker apron.

Then she went out on the piazza and abruptly told Mrs. Perkins she'd go home.

Mrs. Perkins was surprised—as she worded it "struck all of a heap."

"Home, 'Statia? Why, you've only just come."

"No'm. Las' March I left backside the mountain. I guess I go home."

"But, 'Statia, think how much I've taught you. Why, when you came you put the knives on the lefthand side of the plates, and you washed the cups and saucers after the gridiron in the same water, and you served lettuce in a colander dripping all over the best tablecloth, and you put kerosene in the oil cruet, and you never heard of scalding the skin off tomatoes, and you threw out the rind of the cantaloupe, and put the seeds on the table in soup plates with dessert spoons, and——"

"No'm. Yes'm. Now I learned all those thing. I guess I go home."

— "And," the infatuated mistress went on, "you hadn't any proper underclothes, 'Statia. Didn't I buy you a

cut of longcloth, and paper patterns, and show you how to finish 'em after I'd done the machine stitching?"

"Yes'm. The combinations is nice sure and that edging you give me perfectly grand. I guess I go——"

"And your room, 'Statia. At your papa's you slept on the floor and didn't know the meaning of a chif-fonier. I've set apart that little chamber for you to yourself, and the iron three-quarter bed with ruffled pillow-slips, all complete, and a stand and candlestick like a picture. Oh, 'Statia! Besides, it's haying, and I don't know how I can get along with the extra men and baby."

"Yes'm. My papa, he's haying, too. I guess I go home."

"The baby, 'Statia. However can you leave her? She loves you so, and puts out her little hands mornings for you to play with her, like you know how. And I will say this for you, 'Statia, ignorant as you are, you certainly have a way with babies. Isabel took to you right straight off."

"Yes'm. Isabel awful nice baby. My mamma got a baby. She's a boy. I guess I go home."

"Go," was the command jerked out of Mrs. Perkins by the exasperation of the moment. "And don't think I'll ever take you back."

"No'm," returned 'Statia, promptly bursting into tears, and at the instant eagerly clutching the last of her wages which Mrs. Perkins reluctantly produced from a mesh bag. "I think I won't. My papa don't like me to work out no more."

Mrs. Perkins, in the intervals left after doing her own work through haying, waxed voluble over her wrongs.

"I took that girl, Mrs. Bowes, filthy, absolutely unknowing of the commonest ways of decency. She was bright and teachable, I admit, and picked up things fine. Thinks I if she stays a year I'll make something of her. And she leaves at the end of sixteen weeks. No quarrel, no reason for going, just that Polish obstinacy—'I guess I go home.' Of course if the little tyke was homesick I'd gladly have let her have a week off, for I suppose they be attached to their folks, queer as they seem to us; but there was no reasoning with her, so away she goes, bag and baggage, and I suppose that's the end. I wouldn't recommend her, and she'll come to no good in that den of filth."

Mrs. Bowes knew it even better than Mrs. Perkins, being a nearer neighbor.

"No proper furniture at all," said she.

"No regular meal times."

"Always a baby, yet no baby clothes on the line——"

"For that matter no washday——"

"Children playing in the cow stable and chickens roosting in the kitchen——"

"Not a mop——"

"Nor a dishpan. Dishes right in the sink."

"An old stocking for a dishcloth and the same one to wash the children, if they ever are washed——"

"In winter a pan on the back of the stove out of which comes water to boil coffee and into which go hands and soiled clothes——"

The Natupski house seemed a collection of negations, and so indeed it appeared to little 'Statia when she arrived after her education in Mrs. Perkins's kitchen. She had learned so much—where all was new one acquired

knowledge with every waking moment—that it had seemed to her impossible to wait another day without telling papa and mamma. They, of course, could not imagine the pleasure of sleeping in sheets and eating from a table covered with a cloth, nor how much better one felt after a meal of soup, meat, vegetables, salad, pie and tea, than when breakfast, dinner, and supper were alike the unpalatable broken bread and boiled chicory. Besides, 'Statia had read several articles which Mrs. Perkins had put in her way, written by great men and women about exactly such people as her papa and mamma, people who came from far-off places to America and made the mistake of living in the old way.

"It say, papa," she chattered, on the evening of her arrival, "that in America one should live like people here. So one gets to be like them."

"Huh?" papa snorted. Who wanted to be like 'em? Mostly Abner Slocumbs, farms mortgaged and buying pianos.

"Oh, not always, papa. Look at Mr. Perkins and Mr. Bowes, rich men and Americans."

This Kani Natupski acknowledged, but anyway they didn't make it on their farms. Bowes was a big politicker, and Perkins got paid for collecting taxes.

"Well, papa, but they get 'lected. And what's to keep you from being 'lected to something sometime? You got nationalized papers, ain't you? And you go to town meetings. Only we should live like Americans, so the folks who vote for folks see you are reg'lar cit'zen."

Natupski swelled with pride for a moment, then the caution bred by a childhood of poverty and repression asserted itself and he shook his head. Perhaps when

the boys grew up things would be different. He was as he was.

"The boys," broke in 'Statia. "Sure, the boys will do big things. Only they must have American names. We must all have American names."

Mrs. Natupski, who had been foddering the cattle, entered at this juncture and sat down heavily. Even better than Kani did she appreciate the prettiness of 'Statia, with her hair kept in place by combs and a black ribbon, neat shoes and stockings on her trim feet, a well-hung linen skirt (cut down from one of Mrs. Perkins's), and the shirtwaist bought with the first week's pay. Still, she was amazed at such revolutionary talk. American names, indeed? Where did that idea come from?

"One from the old country, mamma," returned 'Statia, "a big thick book, and the lady who wrote it named Mary Antin. She and her papa and mamma and brothers and sisters came from Polotzk not so long ago and right off took American names. In Polotzk she was Mashke, but Mary Antin she is now and her dinner she eats with presidents, too."

Kani made his wife get up so he could have a chair in which to put his feet. Then he remembered that every one in West Holly, in the whole town, knew him as Kani Natupski, and Stanislarni had got into college without an American name.

"All right," shouted 'Statia, with the zeal of the true convert. "Let 'em stay like they are. My name's Annie S. Natupski, and don't you forget it."

Then she went upstairs to bed on the floor along with little sister Novia, determined it was the very last night she would ever sleep that way.

The American name worked wonders. Under it 'Statia installed white iron beds with National springs complete, and papa and mamma actually slept thereon, though the first muttered "Tin!" when they creaked, and mamma thought she could never be really comfortable on anything but a tick fresh stuffed with straw. Fly screens, too, appeared in every window, and papa was made properly apologetic whenever he forgot and propped the door open. Nor did 'Statia feel peeved when, of an evening, she trimmed the Rochester lamp and set it cozily on the round table in the front room, with the Morris chair and willow-rocker hard by, only to see their natural occupants making excuses to seek a congenial atmosphere. She followed to the vicinity of the hog-pen and said reproachfully, "Papa, I don't like it for you to let me spend money on tables and chairs 'less you use 'em."

If papa made an exclamation that sounded very profane it was in a language 'Statia was rapidly forgetting, and he looked ashamed directly afterward.

Another day, "Papa, I made for you a punkin pie. It's like the Americans eat."

And she sat smiling at his right hand until a wedge disappeared.

Again, "Oh, papa, see how splendid I scrubbed the floor. With sand, like Mrs. Slocumb showed me."

He truthfully admired the shining boards, glad this day he was not made to eat another pie; he felt akin to a criminal when he managed to slop a few quarts of swill on them. 'Statia said he ought to—and the pantry was no place for a swill barrel, anyway.

With mamma she felt she should have no difficulty, for mamma had once, on a never-to-be-forgotten occa-

sion, the birth of Yadna, emancipated herself from certain Old-World customs, and they had never been resumed when Yan came along two years later. So in her presence 'Statia cheerfully went about sniffing at the cooking pots, and remarking that a single shirt wasn't clothes enough for a five-year-old Yadna even in summer. 'Statia gave orders, further, that mamma was to do no more field work, but sit on the piazza for hours making embroidery like Mrs. Bowes and Mrs. Perkins. Mrs. Natupski's fingers were somewhat stiff for the needle, but she seldom lifted her eyes from its shining point—not even when she suspected the hired boy was pulling up the vegetables and hoeing the weeds.

'Statia, being possessed with the energy of youth and the hopefulness of a nation that ventures to emigrate, enjoyed herself in this self-appointed mission. How much better it was for her papa to spend money now, than to hoard it as he had done. Presently she would prove to him that he did want a coat of paint on the house and a rambler rose over the door. She had already told him to feel shame for uprooting the woodbine when he bought the place from Mrs. Judson Buckland the year she—'Statia—was born. As for eating from the kettle, and wearing a nightshirt, "Don't, papa!" and "It ain't decent not to do so," had become words she repeated, parrotlike, all day long.

Thus things stood at Natupski's when news arrived that Cousin Anton was coming to West Holly. He too was a Natupski, and papa had not heard from him in years. He wrote that he was quite worn out with injustice, that now he began to feel he was "spinning fine" and, though not of adventurous spirit, he had turned his

possessions into money and was sailing for America. He arrived carrying an extension case which the younger Natupskis held was stuffed with rubles.

'Statia had prepared to lionize him, but he looked too much like papa to be very interesting. Hard and unremitting labor, in both cases, had made the men wizened, knock-kneed, stoop-shouldered before their time.

The children were presented to the new old cousin, in turn, and with elaborate exposition of name and capability. He examined each with the air of a genial slave-driver. 'Statia was rather pleased that he spoke longest about her. Afterward her parents seemed to forget everything but their relative. The little ones might have fallen asleep all over the floor but for 'Statia. She told mamma so in the somewhat severe tone she had unconsciously adopted of late, but mamma did not hear. She was listening, spellbound, while Cousin Anton related gossip of one "Pani Marya"—whom it appeared mamma had known in Poland. 'Statia got the children upstairs, and presently came down with her crocheting. Seated by the window she listened scornfully to the infatuated conversation of the three elders, sprawled over the table, on which Kani had put both cider and sour wine, and where a bottle of weird shape (perhaps smuggled by Cousin Anton) was exuding a colorless liquor of great potency.

"Wiewilgas," "the hoopos," "then I gave him something for a keepsake—oh, a good beating," "Jolkevski from Myemtsevich," "5 zloty, 10 groshes," "no English but a toothful," "Upper Kryvoda, Lower, Vyvlashchyntse"—over and over such talk repeated itself, as the chorus when you sang "Yankee Doodle." 'Statia

considered this a poor way to welcome a newcomer to America. Why not speak of the land he was to make his own? Brag of the R. F. D. and the schools it didn't cost a cent to go to.

Impatiently, 'Statia realized that her parents hadn't been so happy as this for a long time. She it was who had danced and clapped hands when the beds and tables were put in place, but papa's looks were gloomy, and mamma had sighed. Now how their eyes glistened and what questions fell eagerly from their parted lips. Yet all were talking of places none would ever see again. To iconoclastic youth it was a sad waste of enthusiasm.

She looked up and caught the eye of Cousin Anton. He turned to papa with a query. What did papa reply? "Sixteen." He had asked her age. "Upper and Lower" collections of consonants now disappeared from the conversation, and Mrs. Natupski was also left out. Once she stole a glance, half tender and half jealous, at her step-daughter. Statia did not know that Cousin Anton was already bargaining for her, and that Kani, while less liberal than the prospective bridegroom wished, was inclined to greater generosity than Mrs. Natupski approved of, when she remembered the girls in her own brood.

The evening ended with 'Statia very thoughtful. She said good-night to her parents almost as submissively as if she had not started to make them over. The next morning Cousin Anton appeared in a sheepskin coat and enormous boots, looking so like a picture of "typical Polish peasant" in the supplementary geography that 'Statia could scarcely refrain from a real American giggle. She was startled when he came straight to her,

and, touching her forehead with his thick lips, muttered "Anastasi—*panienka* (young lady)."

"My name is called Annie S. Natupski," she remarked, in a somewhat indignant manner, and was flouncing away, when her father, a bit anxiously, called her into the entry.

"Cousin Anton—he may buy Slocumb place," he began.

"All right. I'm willing," said 'Statia, in her pertest Annie S. manner.

"If he get it cheap," Kani went on.

"Don't think he can," interposed 'Statia.

"Well, he think he get married. He start big, like me and mamma didn't."

"Did he bring her from Poland?" 'Statia demanded.

"Who?"

"His wife?"

"*Nie*. He get one here. He take you."

'Statia's eyes bulged. Then, getting used to the idea, she asked, "What did you tell him to make him want me, papa?"

"Me say you wonder of a girl—dam' fine. Go to school and know how to live nice. Not like girl from Poland."

"And Cousin Anton?"

"He say tha's all right. He never mind. He think you and he do fine."

'Statia could wait to hear no more, she had to go right out where Cousin Anton was manfully shoveling dung, and look him over thoroughly. To be sure he wasn't pretty, but perhaps he did have that extension case full of rubles. It would be fine to live in the Slocumb house and

have one's own way. To keep it nice, as Nancy Slocumb did, with a copper tea-kettle always shining, ruffled sash curtains washed and starched on alternate Mondays, books and magazines with articles about "The Strangers Within Our Gates" and the fashions.

"Boh!" she cried suddenly, showing all her teeth to the passing geese. "Cousin Anton wouldn't stand for none such. Or if he did I'd have to work my fingernails off to make him. Why, even my papa takes American ways hard, and he's sixteen years from Poland."

The deal for the Slocumb place hung fire—Abner having no idea of selling—and Cousin Anton seemed to think love-making came after house-hunting. He had never observed the birds, that mate first and then assemble straws for nest-building.

Wajeiceh went to Mifflin Grove peddling one Saturday, and came home accompanied by a youth whom he introduced as Tommy Donahue. Despite his name Tommy Donahue discoursed very ably in Polish until he became convinced that most of the family knew English.

"Tommy Donahue," laughed 'Statia, as she and the handsome visitor stood under a wild grapevine supplementing the meal which 'Statia, no longer domineering, had allowed to be as meager as her father wished.

He laughed back. "Oh, I had another name. Only no one could say it and I couldn't spell it. What is it your father called you—Stacy?"

"My name," she returned, with great decision, "is Annie S. Natupski. Miss Annie S. Natupski."

He understood and nodded. "Good enough," he said. "I think Miss Annie S. is a awful handsome name."

Mrs. Bowes and Mrs. Perkins, on their way to "pass"

magazines for the West Holly book club, saw the two, and Mrs. Bowes remarked, "There's your former maid acting anything but maidenly."

"Yes. And with such a flash fellow! I suppose that's why she was so anxious to get away, to chase after beaux."

"They're all like that," agreed Mrs. Bowes. "When they're sixteen they think they're husband high."

As a matter of fact 'Statia was not "like that" at all. When her father spoke again on behalf of Cousin Anton, and the inconvenience of living over by Silver Street, since Abner Slocumb wouldn't sell, the girl twiddled her feet and said, almost as she had announced her determination to Mrs. Perkins, "I guess I won't get married."

Kani, on the doorstep, was splicing a chisel handle, as he had seen Abner do, and making a poor job of it. When his daughter spoke his hand slipped and the point of the tool entered the fleshy part of his thumb. 'Statia ran for a rag and began to wind a bandage as she had been taught at school.

Tying the ends and tucking in the surplus, she repeated, "I guess I won't get married, papa. You need me to home."

"Yah!" murmured Kani, docilely, "me need you to home." He began to work once more on the chisel and presently the girl went away, perhaps to inform mamma that one should not boil eggs and baby's clothes in the same—or any—tea-kettle. Kani Natupski regarded the neat "first-aid" bandage with an expression of utter loathing, then, grunting "*Labial!*" he tore it from his hand and thrust it into his pocket. He continued work-

ing, paying no attention to his wound beyond shaking off the blood when its flow inconvenienced him. So he was found by 'Statia, who remonstrated in horror, "Oh, papa, when I say and I say you get blood poisoning so!"

Kani looked up. Exasperation, hatred of interference, fear for the loss of his ego, looked smoldering from his grim eyes. 'Statia was well scared. Did papa feel so about it? Had he lived all his years in privation and filth because he preferred privation and filth? Did he long to return to them even now? She recalled the sinister merriment of that evening when Cousin Anton arrived. Pulling at her heart strings was the wish to make over home and family, and in her burned the energy for the task. Love for papa and mamma had led her to it. She could not enjoy her new-found experiences without asking them to share therein.

Well, now it was love for papa and mamma that would take her away.

"Tatulo," she whispered, softly, in his very ear, "I got for you a surprise. I guess I will get married."

Kani was delighted. "Good. Good girl!" he cried, patting her little shoe, which was all he could reach of her. "Me go catch a colt and four, six young creatures. For thee and Anton."

'Statia sighed over her lost cause. Papa must have been tortured indeed if he was willing to do all this to be rid of her.

"Waiterminut," she burbled out, "I guess I'll get married. But I guess I won't get married to Cousin Anton."

"Oi! Oi!"

"No, papa. I guess I'll get married to Tommy Donahue."

Kani's mouth sputtered objections, for which 'Statia was ready. She knew that out of Tommy's fortune "dog's boots might be made"—as she Americanized it, he smoked more cigarettes than he could afford, and didn't earn day wages in a week. But "Just the same, papa, I guess I'll get married to him. He wants what I want, papa, and what you and mamma don't want. You see, papa, me and him was both born in America."

So Cousin Anton "received a basket" (refusal) when across the fields went the two improvident children one October twilight, to set up housekeeping in a cottage just beyond the Bowes place. It was as American as inventive genius and the credit house could make it. 'Statia had ruffled curtains and the kettle was agate ware—blue.

Mrs. Perkins called on Mrs. Slocumb.

"I've run in on her," said the latter, "and she has it comfortable and slick. You'd be surprised."

"The little she knows she learned in my kitchen," observed the other, mollified.

"And I'm getting to wonder," mused Nancy Slocumb, "if mebbe she didn't come home-along with an idee o' getting her folks to live like folks. She was forever stepping over for me to learn her ways o' doing things."

"They pig it worse'n ever, I understand, now that relation from Poland's come."

"Abner tells me, though, that Natupski's getting forehanded every year. He and t'other have put in a bid to chop off the river woodlot. Abner wanted to try, but

they wouldn't hear to any man that couldn't bond hisself for a thousand."

"Yes, it does beat all how those foreigners get along. But give me less money, and decent living," commented Mrs. Perkins. "By the way, I hear 'Statia—'scuse me, Annie S. Donahue—isn't so pizen perticular after all. I guess there's Polish slackness underneath the varnish. They say she turns all the plates upside down before she washes dishes, and if nothing falls out sez they're clean."

"Oh, well," laughed Nancy, "we mustn't expect too much. You know she's only the second generation!"

IV

SUCH A CHANCE

No flock is without a cosset, and why should Kani Natupski think to produce a family containing no failure? Yet he was disgruntled because Stepan grew crooked where Stanislarni and Wajeiceh were straight—weak as they were strong.

That Stepan started handicapped was not considered. West Holly women squealed when it was told that the Natupskis had a baby whose wrist barely filled a finger ring. Kani Natupski took heroic measures. When snow fell he would throw Stepan into drifts from a second story window, so that he might do his share of shoveling. You see, Stepan must dig himself out or remain until the February thaw. Papa laughed sometimes to see the panting boy digging himself out. Papa supposed he was making Stepan tough and hardy. He was giving him inflammatory rheumatism.

Stepan lived through his seventh winter, which was the one in which his brother Stanislarni prepared for college, a parcel, done up in cotton wool and camphorated oil. When they undid him he was crooked. And then there was no use trying to make anything of him. The Natupski elders practically abandoned Stepan. Believing him ruined forever, they let the district school and the neighbors do their worst.

Stepan was never taken anywhere. He knew his

father's farm, Abner Slocumb's home lot, and the sandy road to the schoolhouse. It is to be feared he had a small mind. When the flag broke out on the tall staff before District Seven his heart throbbed with painful delight.

Stepan would probably have liked to be a flag, so high up, so straight.

It was the flags in the picture that held him hours in front of the old corn-barn, which Kani Natupski had allowed circus men to cover with posters the May after 'Statia's marriage. The corn-barn attracted children from all about.

Stepan had eyes for only the great cages bearing on the corner flags—flags of all kinds. They were pictured in the highest of high winds and as large as was possible if anything else was to be visible in the street below.

Stepan believed it all because he had never been out in the world and knew nothing of the world's disappointments. He was familiar only with West Holly, which was never disappointing. The schoolhouse flag looked as one would have it, and was as large as it was.

Besides money to pay for the use of the corn-barn, the circus man had left passes. So the Natupskis would go to their first circus. That is, papa would go; and a good many of the children. Little else but circus was talked in West Holly. Abner Slocumb was going in memory of the days when he tried to crawl under the tent. Blanchard Bowes was going because he expected company from Boston. Stepan, of course, would not go.

The great day was Saturday, but Miss Olive Greene intended to let school out anyway. She had to go because if she didn't her beau would go with another girl.

Confusion reigns in most large families when a merry-

making impends, and confusion reigned in the Natupski home, which was now nearly redeemed from the unusual outburst of chairs, tables, rugs, and sash curtains for which 'Statia had been responsible the previous summer. It was not a delightful confusion. The Natupskis never had enough of anything to go around, and Wajeiceh would get mad because Marinka had taken his fancy arm-garters for quite another purpose.

"You shut up, whole caboodle of you," bawled Kani. "Les' me lick you to stay to home, ev'ry dam' one. Wajeiceh can come early away and milk. Maybe me stay in and get drunk. Not often your papa enjoys himself."

But Wajeiceh was already gone, cross lots. So Kani stuck his teeth together and tried authority with his daughters.

"Some one is got to leave early," he announced. "Pigs there is, remember. And old setting turkey may hatch. Yes, she will hatch. One is got to leave early."

"Poh for turkey," snorted Marinka, prospective pleasure having gone to her head. "Miss Turkey knows how to tend her young ones, I guess. How'd turkeys do 'fore they belonged to folks?"

Then she climbed over the wheel, settled the pick of the female headgear on her frizzes, and said, "Stepan can feed 'em, for once."

Of course Stepan had wanted to go to the circus. It had seemed as if he must go, because of the flags. He could shut his eyes and see the great tent and all the little ones, like mushrooms circled round a toadstool in Slocumb's pasture after a rain. To the music of something called a band lovely ladies rode an incredible num-

ber of horses, kissing hands. Above it all, flags. From each tent a flag, and others strung on lines from peak to peak of the largest.

He had made a very truthful circus, this Stepan who never saw one. He was used to finding happiness in dreams, but in spite of this dream of flags, the day seemed flat after his father, brothers, and sisters had gone. He listened to the waning sounds of chatter.

"Oh, 'Rinka, they say the ringmaster's so handsome. A girl at Holly Centre went to Lansing last year and seen him. When he cracks his whip it goes all through you like a shiver. Say, papa, mayn't I have ten cents for some Woolworth earrings?"

The last sound was Yadna's piping voice, wanting to know, "Say, 'Rinka, do the lady in pink not wear no dress but wings? And is hoopla Polish, papa? It comes out her mouth in the picture, hoopla just like that. Well, if it ain't Polish, whose talk is it?"

What a come-down to realize one was left in West Holly, where it was so still the cows made a big noise eating in the hill pasture.

Stepan felt this was not a disappointment for one day. It was his life in all the years to come. He would never go to the circus. Anger rose and ruled him for the first time. He rolled in the dirt and bit the turf, with howls. He had seen Marinka do this when papa refused her a peek-a-boo waist. He had thought it foolish in a big girl, but now he knew how she had felt.

By and by he came back to himself, a sad little boy. His eyes smarted, his mouth was filled with mud. Both legs ached and with every sob he shivered. Perhaps he was going to die. He hoped so. He would lie down and

die and when papa and the girls came home they would be sorry. They would say, "Stepan, he died because we didn't take him to the circus. Poor Stepan!"

As one cannot lie in the dirt all day, even though one is about to die, Stepan got up and went into the house. It would be dull there, but he had to go somewhere. Only mamma would be at home, and the baby. Mamma was always at home, and there was usually a baby.

Right where the gate would have been only for Natupski thrift using the gate for firewood seven years before Stepan was born, he found a ticket for the circus. It stuck up in the wheel-track as if saying "Come, make the most of me." Some of the circus party had let it fall. He had only to get to Mifflin Grove and this would admit him to the sights and wonders. He needn't die now. He need only get to Mifflin Grove.

Over in Abner Slocumb's kitchen discussion ran high. Nancy declared once and for all she would not be caught dead going to the circus. She declared it a great many times. "Abner Slocumb," she remarked, "I would be a fool. I'd spend fifty cents good money, with the interest due and all, going to a wicked performance that the Methodist Church never countenanced. Offers free tickets to clergymen! Don't tell me. Of course it offers free tickets to clergymen because no clergymen ever take 'em."

"Aw, don't make such a clack," said Abner, obnoxiously shaving himself a day ahead. "Ain't nothing immoral in seeing the elephant h'isting a wisp o' straw in his trunk and putting it on his back, nor in watching the great polar bear everlastingly walk round the chunk of ice in his cage. Educational and improving, Nance. So

it says on Natupski's barn. G'long over and read it for yourself."

"I will not," she replied, nipping in her lips, "and you men folks might been better employed than hanging round there. Great polar bear indeed! It's my opinion all you men considered was that scandalous young woman in short skirts a-straddle of eight horses in full gallop. Not that you can make me believe there's any such thing."

"Nance," whispered Abner, advancing razor in hand and making motions that must have looked murderous to the robin in the apple tree by the north window, "there's two little fellers has atted me to go to the circus. Guess who they be?"

"Can't," she returned.

"Two little fellers," Abner went on, sweeping the lather from his cheeks with a rasp as of saw-filing, and wiping his razor on a square of newspaper. "One's the one I used to be, who never had fifty cents to call his own. T'other's the one we might have had. We'd both have gone and tooken him. You'd not have stood out, Nance, when 'twas our little chap wanted to see the clown and the wonderful bearded lady?"

"No," said Nancy, softened to that extent that she cut a doughnut man with her ready knife instead of sticking to the five-fingered variety, "I s'pose I wouldn't. But you know well enough, Abner, he never was nor wanted. But if 'twas any young one you was a-going to pleasure I wouldn't say a word. It's only that it looks so foolish for you, a gre't grown man, to be going. Just as if I was taking to doll babies."

"Any young one," said Abner, his eye ranging the

landscape. "Any young one a-tall. Well, here goes. There's a Natupski young one left to home."

In this way there fell at Stepan's feet a marvelous chance.

While Mr. Slocumb harnessed, Stepan went into the house, biting his fingers to be sure he did not dream asleep. He would see the animals and the flying people on little swings. He would see the flags.

He climbed to the room where his mother lay in bed with the new baby. Well, it was not a very new baby, being all of a week old, and named Zinzic, but mamma never got out of bed now inside of ten days.

"Such a chance, mamma," said Stepan. "You think I will stay to home, and papa thinks I will stay to home. But I won't. Such a chance."

Mrs. Natupski turned toward Stepan. Perhaps because there was none other to look at—the sleeping baby didn't count—she saw Stepan as if she had never seen him before, learned the wistful beauty of his eyes, the crisp curling of his abundant hair, the healthful glow of his face. She hadn't thought of it in the past years, but she loved Stepan.

"Dearest one," she murmured in her native language, and drawing him near gave him a long kiss.

From next door came the sound of Abner Slocumb harnessing, which meant abrupt "stand overs" and drop-pings of thills at vexatious periods.

"Such a chance," whispered Stepan, his voice muffled by the fuzzy neck ruffle of mamma's nightgown, in which his lips were buried. "Such a chance."

Ten minutes later Abner Slocumb stepped carefully over the rotten boards of the Natupski piazza, called

aloud several times, and knocked with his whip stock, with no response. There stood the door, wide open; there walked the hens, in and out; there sat the cat on the table, cleaning her whiskers; it was just as it always was; but for the first time in seventeen years nothing human was in sight.

"Don't look nat'ral," he reported to Nancy, "no man beating nobody, no young ones bawling. 'Rinka ain't fussing up a fancy bunnet. I don't know the place. Keep an eye on it, Nance. I'll go along. Probably I'll pick up the boy down the road a piece."

The buggy spun away under the nooning sun, but no boy was picked up. Abner forgot his disappointment when he got to Miffin Grove, indulged himself in a real good oyster stew—twenty cents a bowl, our most expensive dish—and secured a place under the big top full early. After all, it was the boy's loss, not hisn. Just then a chap came along with a trick nose that he could make four feet long without winking, and nothing was worth thinking of but laughter.

The Natupskis were there in a row, a trifle less happy than Abner Slocumb, because the circus makes its strongest appeal to the Yankee character. Kani looked darkly down the line. Only for its being a holiday he should not think he was having such a fine time. He guessed he would go and get drunk when it was over. His eyes went again down the line, which began with sleepy Yan, leaning against him, and ended with the smartly dressed 'Statia and her husband, Tommy Donahue. All his, all acquired since he came to America, alone and poor. He ought to be having a fine time. Perhaps he would have had one could Marinki have left her

bed and come along. Only that would have left Stepan alone.

But why leave Stepan?

"Say, 'Statia,'" he called, interrupting a good joke of the head clown, to disgust of surrounding mobs, "Stepan would have liked it here."

"True for you, papa," 'Statia shrilled, for she was quick and had caught the joke, so to the dickens with all slowpokes in the back seats. "Me and Tommy said so all along, didn't we, Tommy? Stepan gets a big boy now and deserves some fun. Miss Greene tells me he does splendid in school. Likely he makes a somebody, if he is crooked."

After the performance the Natupski family met Abner Slocumb in front of the "September Morn" ballyhoo. Abner was trying to muster courage to go in and be fooled; the Natupskis were doing all the looking possible for nothing.

"Hello," said Abner. "When you folks laying out to go home? I d'know but it's all right, and I d'know as 'tis all right, but I was over there this forenoon and couldn't raise hide nor hair o' nobody. Thought I'd fetch the little lame feller to the doings, but he never answered, though I hollered my fool head off."

A moment's pause and not a Natupski was in sight. The entire family had been thrust on to an already overloaded trolley car bound for Holly.

"By chowder," soliloquized Abner, "he does think they is something wrong," and added himself to the human freight. At Holly, teams were redeemed from the public rack, and the route taken up around the mountain. Natupski drove as if animated by seven devils and

his evident fright spread to Abner Slocumb. Natupski reached home first in spite of his heavy wagonload. There was a dead silence about the place. An old hen was looking out of the garret window. That was pretty bold for a hen, even at Natupski's. The fowls seldom went upstairs now. The girls didn't seem to like 'em around the bedrooms.

Kani ran hither and thither, in response to chaotic ideas of danger. Had Stepan fallen down the holes in the upper barn, where the hay came through to the mangers? Or was it the savage bull in the pasture that had tossed him? Go, Wajeiceh, quick, and holler down the well. Sometimes little boys fall down wells. The bucket goes too fast, and the chain drags them in. The girls thought of other dangerous places and examined the rickety cellar stairs, the ell room with the missing floor boards, the teetery barnyard wharfing.

"Stepan," every one was calling. "Oi, Stepan. Come quick. If you is a-hiding come out quick. See what we got for you. Lots of pretty things. Oi, Stepan."

Never before had there been a home-coming when the little crooked boy, gentlest of all the flock, was not smiling shyly at the door or window, expecting nothing but a story of adventures in which he had not shared. Simultaneously, a sense of their own selfishness came over the family. It was more than the gentle regret that had half spoiled the circus, though perhaps it was rooted in that. The girls began to cry. They were tired, hot, nervous. Worry overbalanced dignity, even 'Statia and 'Rinka bawled like peevish babies.

"You shut up," snarled Kani. "Shut up or me lick

every one together. What good is it me look every place while you make such a noise? Go find some place to look in."

"We've looked every place. He ain't nowhere," wailed 'Rinka.

Kani threw himself on the step in stony despair. He began to regret every failure in loving duty to the lost child. There were a great many. It was wrong not to have taken him to the circus. He could see that now. And last winter he should have had a warm blanket to sleep under, instead of sacking and bits of old carpet. Shoes, too—it had not been right to send him the long frosty walk to school in October without shoes. And the circus. Of course he should have gone to the circus.

Wajeiceh was to blame! Kani decided Wajeiceh was to blame, because if he could not blame and lick somebody he should go mad. Wajeiceh should have said, "Tatulo, take Stepan." What if he did get beaten for not minding his own business? If the little boy had been at the circus he would not have been lost. And now it grew dark and he could not be found. Nor even looked for, unless there was oil in the lantern, and there never was now 'Statia was married. Lazy girls, you go fill the lantern and find your brother. Find for me my little Stepan. He was dearer than any of you. He never asked for a nickel. He never went no place where he could spend a nickel. He never went to the circus. Would we had gone alone, just me and him, and left you home, ungrateful wretches.

Mr. and Mrs. Slocumb were, in the meanwhile, acting the part of good neighbors, and investigating their own

premises thoroughly, continuing the search after Kani Natupski gave up to sit down and wail. Nancy, emerging from a third going over the hog barn recesses, was about to tell Abner she'd "raked every hideaway place with a fine-tooth comb," when she thought she saw two dusky forms stealing under the garden fence. As she looked they were lost in the raspberry canes. It gave her such a turn she had to go into the house and take a swallow of the strong green tea which had been brewing an hour on the back of the stove.

Mrs. Slocumb's eyes had not deceived her. The larger of the two sneaked up the Natupski back stairs, the little crooked one came softly around the house and said to his bewildered father, "Was you calling to me, papa? Did you want me for anything?"

"Stepan! Little Stepan!" cried Kani Natupski, and grabbed the child, while his bony figure was convulsed with sobs. "Yes, me wants you for something. Me wants you—wants you to take to the circus tonight."

Stepan slipped to his feet and put one hand on his father's cheek, while he answered, "Oh, but I wouldn't want to go. Honest, I wouldn't care to go. It's after sundown, so I wouldn't care."

Kani looked aghast for a moment, and then shook his head sadly. He thought the boy was afraid of the darkness, having never been away in the night. To think that he had never been shown what the street lights made of Mifflin Grove!

Marinka and the rest crowded up with gifts. It had been a wonderful day and no one had forgotten Stepan at all.

But the most wonderful part could be told only by

secret glances between mamma's eyes and his. Hereafter he and his mother would have things to tell each other. Yet to think how near he had been, that forenoon, to losing the chance—such a chance!

Only for a thought it would have been lost. The thought came while he lay against mamma's shoulder, as she said "Dearest one." It was the thought that mamma would be alone. And she would be more unhappy than he had been, because he had had mamma, but she would not have Stepan. And if he had never seen the circus, she had never seen anything but the barn across the road.

Stepan did not consider that she had come from Poland in the long ago.

Mamma had never seen the school flag.

Why should not mamma see the school flag?

"Oh, mamma," he cried, in her own tongue, "get up and come with me. I will show you something beautiful. Such a chance!"

Mrs. Natupski bared all her teeth and a few places where teeth should have been. "You never tell," she commanded, "and I will get up. Such a chance!"

As on previous occasions of voluntary detention, Mrs. Natupski was weary of pretending to be a fine lady and resting her feet.

She wrapped herself in an old waterproof of 'Statia's and into the sweet spring noon they stole—she and Stepan. The little baby lay on her arm. He would be no trouble. Little Natupski babies never were. Abner Slocumb was approaching the front of the house, out of the back the woman and the boy slipped, to patter over the crisp new grass, past the trees where fluffs of

yellow feathers were fussing with tags of string and horse hair. First she must look at the corn barn.

"See," said Stepan, pointing to this flag and that, and "See," he cried in a louder tone, when his finger reached the great one pictured at the apex of the tent.

Mamma pointed out a tiny one, with such a look one would think she was eating something that didn't taste good. "Russ!" she said, way up in her nose. Stepan understood. That flag had kept Poland from being free, so papa and mamma had been obliged to come to America. He was glad they had come to America, but he was quite willing to insult the Russian flag. So he condemned it.

"Ain't straight," he said of the imperial eagle. Then, putting a hand tenderly on the big flag of all, he looked at mamma.

"Straight!" she said approvingly of the thirteen stripes, and Stepan glowed. Mamma knew of what he was always thinking. She had never been told, but she knew.

Her feet itching, they went on so quietly that nothing in the hedgerow was disturbed. Violets kept peeping at the sun, robins continued flinging trills into the air, and what little snakes had ventured forth to bask kept on basking. Usually Mrs. Natupski was death on snakes, but this was not an ordinary day.

At the schoolhouse she was glad to rest and put the baby to bed in the grass. It would have killed any American baby, of course, to sleep on the ground in May after a shower, but it would not injure Zinzic Natupski.

Now came the triumphant moment Stepan was to show the flag. He went to the locker which had been arranged

on the outside of the building, so that the firstcomer might hoist it on school-days without waiting for the schoolhouse to be unlocked. Trembling with pleasure Stepan slipped the flag on the rope and began to pull. It was hard work and his hands were cut, but he would not mind if only mamma would look. She leaned against the bank with her eyes shut. Had she gone to sleep? He remembered the sad evening when she went to sleep while Yadna was showing how to weave paper mats kindergarten way. Yadna had cried and said she would never, never again try to treat mamma as other girls treated their mammas. But that had been in the house, in winter, by the hot stove, after mamma had shoveled all day.

"See, mamma, it floats out," he cried.

To his great joy she opened her bead-like eyes, and began making her head go from side to side, as the flag fluttered, while she chanted, "Straight, straight, straight," to a sort of tune.

"Oh, mamma, sing," he begged, and she sang, trolling out something she and Kani had used to hum when they went to the woods before America was even a dream.

It was a pretty song, with flowers in it. She knew another, with wolves, but she did not sing that. She did not believe Stepan would like it. Besides, there were no wolves in America.

Although there was nothing to eat but ends of bleached grass blades, they were obliged to stay to salute the flag at sunset. Stepan had set his heart on that.

Luckily the sun disappeared early from West Holly, on account of the mountain, so Stepan's ceremony was over long before official sundown. Mrs. Natupski stood

and raised her hand as he told her—even the baby's hand was held up. To Stepan belonged the thrilling experience of bringing down the flag, and feeling himself for a moment enveloped in its folds.

Then Mrs. Natupski peered through the windows at the place where her children were being made into Americans, and felt ready to go home for another ten years.

There is probably nothing pleasanter than to go home-along in the gloaming when the air is perfumery and a gentle fatigue tells of the garnering of pretty memories. So Mrs. Natupski and Stepan went home on the great circus day.

With all the chores impending the family was galvanized into action just after Kani put his son down, half suffocated with the hugging that alone seemed adequate expression of a great relief. In ten seconds milk pails clashed, cows rattled into stanchions, and much profanity, English and Polish, was heard in the vicinity of the pig-pen.

Stepan meant to help all he could, in small ways, and the ways were not always so small because, like most crooked boys, he was handy-fingered. When he collided with one of the others he would put a shy question about the circus. Was it as nice as the pictures on the corn-barn?

Kazia thought the ringmaster was nicer, indeed, quite as handsome as the Holly Depot station-agent, but not so satisfactory. He was grand and awful, but one could never know him, and the station-agent lifted his cap whenever he saw her, just as if she was a grown lady.

To Yadna Stepan ventured a question about flags. Did she see any?

"Sure," said Yadna. "They was sugary ones. A ole lady in a sunbunnet sold 'em fi' cents a bag. Only I didn't have no fi' cents."

Stepan joined Novia in laughing at the little girl, and then Wajeiceh came in with a dish of milk froth for the cat and emptied his pocket of a pungent handful of those very sweets. "You missed it, kid," he said. "You ought to have called papa's bluff and made him take you this evening. Another year—another year's a long while. And the acrobats were sure great. A big fellow took a little fellow and threw him right over the heads of everybody. He'd have been smashed to jelly only for the net."

Stepan, who had never forgotten being flung from the upper window into the snow, was rather glad he would not see that. He had the day with mamma to remember; it was enough to find one open heart. Mamma might scold by and by, and even beat him, because she would be mamma, but she had seen the flag, and she had known why he loved it. When he had said nothing, she had said "Straight."

"Papa," said Yadna, "circus comes every year, don't it?"

"Yah. Nex' time you stay all home. Stepan goes."

Well, perhaps. But not in the night. Stepan had said not in the night, and papa had felt glad because he was tired, and there were all the barn cattle to feed. Papa did not know Stepan would not go in the night because, of course, at sunset all the flags were hauled down!

V

MODEST SHOP WINDOWS

"Now we've got 'em," said Arthur Slocumb, "now we've frothed and foamed to get 'em, I wonder what good they are to us?"

He referred to the documents showing that Arthur Slocumb and Stanislarni Natupski had obtained degrees at Harvard.

Stanislarni, before answering Arthur's question, removed a flaring pipe from his mouth in order to grin.

"Frothed and foamed in truth," he observed. "Getting that has knocked my one last illusion on the head. I found most things were not what I expected them to be, but I did cling to the idea that a dignitary would so far put himself out as to personally hand me a sheepskin. The great day's over. We chased round in the rear of processions and didn't get a smell of the alumni. After I've lost you a few dozen times I think I'll go away where I can be quiet, when I see you hot-footing from somewhere and you say 'Got your sheepskin?' And of course I say——"

"Of course you say 'Search me.'"

"Exactly. And you tell me to go over there, into the basement, and a fellow'll give me it. And I do. And he does. And it isn't a sheepskin! In a basement!"

"Now we've got 'em," said Arthur, "I wonder what good——"

"Shut up! You said it once. It'll do you good all right all right, because two or three years from now you may be diving into another basement and getting another. That is, if you stick to law school. Two or three years from now. What'll I be at two or three years from now?"

"Something worth while, wherever you are," answered Arthur, stoutly. "No fellow could put up the fight you have to make good, and make good, without being the big noise afterward."

"Ah," observed Stanislarni, pushing a pound of fist through his hair. "There, my dear Arthur, you touch me on the raw. If there's one thing above all others I'm anxious not to be, it's the big noise. That job is grievously over-filled by too many Americans whose birth, like mine, keeps 'em from running for president on the ticket of Personal Exploitation. We write of our childhood, and when we describe our birthplace as furnished entirely with a bread bin and religious symbols, and tell how we slept in the bin on the grub, some nice hygienic woman's club writes us a letter and offers to listen if we will deliver it a lecture. So we stand up and give our opinion of the Declaration of Independence, and wonder audibly how it is that it's waited all these years for us to appreciate it, implying that no one else has ever noticed it at all. Then we're interviewed, and come out under a caption calling attention to 'Debt America Owes Aliens.' Debt! Poppycock!"

"And so," commented Arthur, taking this so apathetically that one imagines he had heard it before, "you don't want to be a big noise?"

"I want," said Stanislarni, "to be an ordinary citizen,

living quietly, decently, and without being pointed at as a curiosity in the town of Holly."

"Get out!" bleated Arthur, now really startled. "You aren't going into the country? Why not accept that business offer and lose yourself in New York?"

"Begin at the ground up and learn the ins and outs from the top down," Stanislarni read from a good-looking typewritten letter. "Well, I'll admit a desire to get after the concern's written English. But I think I'll pass it up. I don't think I want to spend my life buying something and trying to sell it again. Too many of us do that. And it's a very inadequate return for what our fathers suffered in getting us over here. One may probably buy and sell in the older countries. It's up to us to make better use of what America offers."

"You talk like a blooming Chautauqua course yourself," sneered Arthur. "And you'll find your illusions bu'sted, as sure as you got your diploma in a basement instead of from dignitaries in rows. But, of all places, why Holly?"

"It happens to be my home."

"Yes," said Arthur, excited almost to tears, "and that home will drag you down and sit on you. To a few, like my old Uncle Abner, you'll be a fine fellow, a Polish boy who went to college, but they won't understand you in the least for all that. Your brothers and sisters will expect you to aid 'em in all sorts of impossible ways. And the town itself! Darn little self-satisfied, narrow-minded, minister and doctor proud village."

"Perfectly good description," said Stanislarni, "hinting at several reasons why I'm going."

"Oh, all right," returned Arthur, through clinched

teeth. "Your haste to be off tells me that in spite of your ultra-modest protestations, you are really intending to take up he-dressmaking in your near-native dale. Tell me one thing, which you going to make over first—Natupski family or town?"

Stanislarni made the kiddish reply of a sofa pillow, but as a fact the question troubled him on the train, and he got into the smoker to think.

He wouldn't try to make over his father and mother, because he knew they didn't want to be made over. Since 'Statia's marriage papa had been only anxious to reduce the new furniture to kindling wood, and start a cold frame in the parlor. No, the Natupskis didn't relish being reformed. Stanislarni, from his own independence, knew why they didn't relish it. He had never let anybody but Arthur try it on him, and Arthur's power extended nowhere beyond haberdashery.

Thinking of Arthur in that connection brought to mind the first time his cicerone had taken him out to buy things. Left alone Stanislarni would have gravitated to the gaudy stores with the cheap and nifty display.

"Nix," said Arthur, "the places with the best shirts have the modest shop windows."

"That's it—for my wares today," Stanislarni told himself, "I'll put 'em in a modest shop window."

It was very late when Stanislarni left the train. That is, it was very late for Holly. About half-past nine o'clock. Holly waited up until this train whistled its way out of town, then called it a day, and extinguished the lights. As the young man shouldered his luggage and started to walk round the mountain the post-office

was bolted with a noise as of jails in furious grand opera.

The grocery store did not follow suit.

Stanislarni felt that he must stop and learn the reason, and was told that it was because several of the men were inside kicking Dick Perkins awake.

"How d'ye mean—awake?"

"Why, the fool took a contract to deliver a thousand cords of wood at Mifflin Grove for a thousand dollars. You know Dick—of course, his folks live in West Holly. Dick's married not to suit his mother, and he wanted this thousand the worst way. Mortgage on his place just going to be foreclosed, but he was let draw five hundred in advance, and settled that. He's got to work off the dead horse now, you see. Been on the job six weeks and all in. Can't keep a man to spell him for what he can afford to pay, and hasn't had a proper rest for a month."

Stanislarni's entrance into the business life of Holly was rather more abrupt than he had planned. Casting his young trunk to the ground, he demanded of the youth before him, "Hell! Can't you drive a span?"

"Can I?"

"Well, why're you standing round liked a damned stoughton bottle for? Why don't you take the load to Mifflin?"

"Huh? How'd I look butting in? His funeral. Not mine. Nor yourn. Besides, he only offers a dollar and a quarter a day."

Stanislarni took one glance at the interior of the store, where the half-crazed Perkins was whimpering to be let

alone, even while he spurred his will to prop his eyelids up.

"Knock that poor devil down and leave him lay," shouted Stanislarni, heaving in his baggage. "In the morning I'll call for the valise and let him know he's hired me to drive for a dollar and a quarter."

Stanislarni "spelled" his employer for a week, driving every other load. He found Dick Perkins just as he remembered him in District Seven, good-natured and quite devoid of forethought. He was exactly the sort of a chap who would agree to deliver one thousand cords of wood for one thousand dollars, and see only the thousand dollars. Stanislarni, on his trips, saw only the thousand trips. If the trips could be managed right, the money would be partly velvet. Not all, as poor Dick Perkins had fatuously believed, but partly. Stanislarni covered the ends of ties with figures proving the number of miles to be traveled, and calculations of the depreciation in horseflesh.

The last was the principal handicap. Stanislarni came down into the Perkins kitchen one morning. (He boarded with the young people so as to be near the job.) Dick was groaning into his own clasped arms. One of the second span was trembling on the legs, quite unable to stand, let alone draw a load.

"Condition powder," advised Stanislarni.

"No use. I've been keeping the creatures up with them for some time. The last trip was made with a shot of strychnine."

Stanislarni was struck with horror for as much as fifteen seconds. This was Dick Perkins, whose mother had introduced the S.P.C.T.A. in West Holly! The

very wagon drawn by the tortured beast bore a "Kindness to Animals" sign.

Dick Perkins proceeded to curse his luck, also his young wife, who stood sniffing in the pantry door.

"And what's eating those horses," he went on, "God only knows. Don't seem to me any job for two of 'em to draw a load to Mifflin and haul the wagon back empty. But down they lie and croak just to be vexatious. I wish father'd put me in the Navy, as he threatened."

Stanislarni stood like a young tower in the small kitchen, a shoe in each hand. To think it was simple as that, and he had missed it. Figured all over the ends of ties, and then had missed it. And so simple! Well, all great discoveries were stuck in front of noses, but people didn't see 'em for centuries. Then along came some genius and told 'em what to do with the squeal of the pig or a similar waste product, and—presto—a fortune.

As his hired man continued to stand stock-still, Dick Perkins stopped fuming after a time, and asked, sarcastically, "I say, Natupski, had you any idea of going to Mifflin today?"

"Not in the least," said Stanislarni; "it'll need twenty-four hours' consideration."

"Is this a job at a dollar and a quarter a day," asked Perkins, "or is it a darn debating society?"

"It's a school," said Stanislarni. "I want to take a recess to learn the answer in."

"I suppose you mean the day off," said Perkins, sulkily.

Stanislarni gave him a good look for the first time since coming downstairs, and replied that he did. To his surprise this seemed as much a matter for regret to

Perkins as the sick horse and the looming ruin of the contract. He didn't know that some men seldom see essentials because of trifles.

Stanislarni's business kept him until afternoon at Mifflin Grove, and when he came back he made a detour to Holly Centre, where the foundation was being dug for a large new addition to the dormitory buildings on the Academy campus. He did not near West Holly until almost sunset. He thought he would strike up the old road, by Solomon Russell's, turn in cross lots, and go to see his folks. He had been too busy driving to Mifflin and resting between trips for more than brief calls in the past week.

As he wriggled through the barb wire that separated Natupski from Slocumb land, which was like going from a desert to an oasis, because Slocumb's fields were succumbing to long continued neglect, while Natupski's responded to sustained industry, he saw a man leading a tottering horse.

"Why, it's father," Stanislarni told himself. "Hello, father."

Kani Natupski raised a pair of disapproving eyes.

"You?" said his father. "Why ain't you working? Loafing four years, a feller ought to get rested."

Kani insisted on thinking going to college was one long, useless vacation.

Stanislarni was looking at the horse. It was the wreck of a once fine animal, ruined by overwork and too heavy drafts on his strength. He recognized it. He could not help but recognize it. It was the horse Dick Perkins had kept up with condition powders and finished with a shot of strychnine. Stanislarni knew something

about horses, for he had driven a dray in Boston one vacation during his college course. It was the summer before his sophomore year. The next summer he drove a taxicab.

"What are you going to do with it?" he asked his father. "Put it out to grass? Hasn't Perkins pasturage of his own?"

Kani Natupski assumed a look of elation.

"Bought him," he gleed. "Dam' good bargain. Dick Perkins pay one hundred dollar two month ago. Sell to me for ten. Dam' good bargain."

"Don't see it," persisted Stanislarni. "You'll have to feed the creature up all summer, and then I doubt if it's ever worth much. See how it shakes when I touch its flank? Its spirit's broken and its nerve's gone. He doped it."

Kani jumped up and down with the impatience of his joy.

"Sure he give dope. Dam' fine thing. He show me how. Use horse through haying—one week—ten days. Save half of hiring horse at two dollar day. Hay in—knock um on head. Two dollar for carcass to glue factory. And want get in big load to barn in hurry, bunch burrs under tail. Dam' fine bargain."

Stanislarni's answer was to draw from a pocket the revolver he had secured a permit to carry when on the long night rides. A moment later the abused animal lay dead on the hillside.

Then his hand went back into his pocket and this time came forth with a ten-dollar bill. It was the only money he possessed.

"Take it," he said, and pressed it within the not un-

willing hand of his father. Then he resumed his stride to the house. After a moment's contemplation of the dead bargain, the little man pattered by his side, taking four steps to the son's one. Stanislarni was whistling, having picked up this Yankee accomplishment from Arthur Slocumb. Kani was gnashing his teeth, cracking his finger joints, cursing and occasionally giving a withering look at this huge marplot.

They reached the house without further incident. Stanislarni, who had spent four years forgetting that such obstacles were ever before doors, walked cleverly over the hens and Zinzic and Yan on the step; Kani, who was met by them many times a day, stumbled, and gave such a vicious kick that it took half an hour to quiet the little boys. After the noise subsided, Stanislarni went to the piazza to speak to a few more brothers and sisters who were assembled in an attractive and characteristic family group. 'Rinka was mending a pair of gaudy stockings with safety pins, Novia did nothing at all quite gracefully, Wajeiceh hectored Tadcuse, and Yadna was chopping wood. Since Yadna was only seven years old this was supposed to be most appropriate work for her, and really she wielded the sharp little ax very well, while splinters flew in a manner most deceptive to the chickens, that always thought they would turn out to be eatable.

Stanislarni snatched the hatchet and turned to Wajeiceh and Tadcuse. "You great big brutes," he remarked, "sitting there and letting a little girl split wood!"

He finished the job with stern expedition, while Yadna sucked a finger and criticized his manner of working. It was plain she considered herself an adept at making kindlings.

He went into the kitchen, washed his hands, dried them by a few passes in the air, the roller towel being something to shudder at, and joined the group on the piazza.

Novia slipped a dirty little hand into big brother's, and crooked Stepan smiled from where he sat by mamma. He and mamma were great pals now, they were bringing up baby Zinzic together.

Stanislarni made up his mind to consult his father as to the plan which had been born in Dick Perkins's kitchen, in the interest of which he had been to Mifflin Grove and Holly Centre that day.

"I suppose you know all about Dick Perkins's job," he began. "One thousand cords of wood to be hauled to Mifflin Grove for one thousand dollars. He didn't reckon on all the bad features—muddy roads, sick horses, wear and tear of wheels, besides its taking so much time he can't hoe his crops or get in his hay. If he gives up he forfeits what he's already earned, and must pay over the advance which he has put into his house."

"Yah," said Kani, with the cheer of a prosperous man passing judgment on an unprosperous one. "Dam' fool."

"Well, listen, father. Here's a plan I've got to make the job a paying instead of a losing one. What d'ye think of it? You see, the horses get worn out, and can't carry more than two cords, anyhow. At that rate, leaving out Sundays and storms, he'll be two years completing the contract. He'll have paid about six hundred to me, or whoever helps him drive; will have lost his own time for twenty-four months, and have bought several hundred dollars' worth of horse flesh."

"Sure," commented Kani. "Dam' 'Merican fool."

"Now for my plan. They're going to haul the bricks and lumber for the new dormitory at the Academy from Mifflin Grove. They'll use a motor truck. I've got the promise of the job to drive the truck. The pay is eighteen dollars a week. Instead of sending the truck empty, I have arranged to run it around the mountain, take on four cords or so of wood, and drive them to Mifflin. Bad, eh?"

Kani Natupski caught the idea even as his son presented it. He might seem obtuse when a moral principle was before him, but he could understand any plan that involved making money. He jumped into the air, clapped his hands, kicked Tadcuse playfully, and kissed Stanislarni with a loud smack. Then he handed his eldest son his hat.

"Hurry up, quick," he said, "buy the job 'fore Perkins sell to some one. He talk about giving bonus—horses, cow, wagon—to one who take it from him. He throw in for nothing what he already done. Hurry quick. Novia, fetch slate and make figures. Eighteen dollar week and one thousand for carrying wood. Multoplicate and substract up. Then all come out is for hire of truck round mountain and gasoline to Mifflin and back. Good, Stanislarni. Fine, good. Rich you shall be. Dam' rich."

"Not I," replied Stanislarni, leaning back and pulling Yan's ear. "I'm to get the wages for driving. That's fair and square. Perkins will have the money for carrying the wood—the thousand dollars—minus what the extra truck load lets the building contractors in for. And he can run his farm all the while his job is being done."

At this untoward moment Novia presented the slate on

which her sum was done very neatly. Mr. Natupski smashed the slate over the nearest head—luckily that of Wajeiceh, whose skull was reasonably thick. Then he went out to the barn and raised hell for a couple of hours.

As it was by that time late even for West Holly, which in the persons of the Natupskis kept hours that would have scandalized Holly Depot, Stanislarni started for his bed at Dick Perkins's. Right in the road he met Perkins himself. Perkins was as angry as Kani Natupski had been twice during the day, and he had a good many more words to tell it in.

"Here's your bag," said he, slamming Stanislarni's personal property at him. "You needn't come down to the house for anything. Marion picked the things up. They're all there. You're fired. Do you hear—fired? It's all over town, how you've been snooping round to cut under me. Run a truck round the mountain and carry off my wood, while I'm at home working like a nigger in the hayfield or cradling oats. You riding round on an auto, and me digging potatoes. Nice sitting down job for Stanislarni Natupski, while Dick Perkins is breaking his back! Pretty soft for you. And I suppose you expect me to pay you a dollar and a quarter a day for it."

"No," said Stanislarni, "I expect you to pay me eighteen dollars a week."

"Well, you lose your guess. As I said, you're fired."

"Wait a minute—listen!" said Stanislarni, with the good-natured tolerance that always gave him the air of a massive St. Bernard dog smiling over a puppy worrying a bone. And he carefully outlined the plan, as he had outlined it to his father. Kani Natupski emerged from the barn and stood in the semi-darkness, listening.

Instead of seeing the scheme in all its beauty, as Kani Natupski, the supposedly stupid foreigner, had seen it, Dick Perkins grew more unreasonably angry with every explanation. He knew he was being done by this Polander; each appeal to his judgment added to the assurance of being done. He would not be done. He had been enough of a laughing-stock all through the affair, kicked awake at Holly Depot by men who'd always tell it against him, if, like his great grandfather, he lived to be a hundred and one.

"Save your breath to cool your porridge," he said, roughly, when the ever-patient Stanislarni would have urged him again to consider. "It's come to put up or shut up. Will you buy the contract for cash? No promises, but hard cash—every cent I've actually earned?"

Stanislarni turned his pockets.

"You see," he said. "Not a red. And that would be no way for you to do, anyhow. You'd lose all your time, and the worth of the worn-out horse. Don't spite yourself."

"Money talks," sneered young Mr. Perkins. "Your chance has come and gone. If you had any faith in your own crazy scheme you'd be willing to take a risk. But you don't catch me. I'll turn the contract over tomorrow to the first cash offer. G' night."

So Stanislarni slept under his father's roof.

The next day his father treated him like one of the family, told him twice to "shut up" at breakfast, and set him a task repairing fence in a distant pasture. Stanislarni good-naturedly shouldered an ax and went to the work.

When Stanislarni returned to the house, hungry for a much better supper than it would afford, his father sat on the piazza, emptying sand and gravel from his shoes. A white paper blotched with red seals lay on the dirty boards. Kani shoved it toward his son and said nothing. Stanislarni took it and read.

"Why, father," he said. "Why, father!"

It was a bill of sale, properly witnessed and drawn up by Blanchard Bowes, J. P., wherein Solomon Russell took from Richard Perkins all right and title to a certain hauling contract, the consideration being pay at one dollar per cord for the amount carried to date.

"Turn her," said Kani, and Stanislarni did. There were two transfers, one from Solomon Russell to Kani Natupski, and one from Kani Natupski to Stanislarni of the same name.

The young man breathed hard. At five o'clock that day he hadn't been worth a penny, and he was very much afraid he would not secure the trucking job without the inducement of the backward haul. Now he was worth, in prospect, a substantial sum. And his father had brought it all about. His little shrunken father, only half awakened from his alien ways, whom he had condemned as having no interest in him, no sympathy for him.

Father and son did not speak, they were as silent as a couple of New Englanders might have been over an affair of the heart, but Stanislarni took his father's boot and groped inside for a stone lodged near the toe, and Kani grunted when he got it back.

Just then Abner Slocumb strolled over for a confab.

"How d'ye like it, boy," he asked, "being the big noise of Holly?"

"I hope my truck won't be such a nuisance as all that," was Stanislarni's comeback.

"Get out! You know well enough what I mean. Say, come over to our house to supper. She's making a short-cake and won't take no for an answer. Bring some the others—say Novy and Yadna and the little lame feller. I'd give you all a bid only we ain't got but half a dozen of any kind of plates. We never laid out for a big family."

Stanislarni would have remained beside his newly discovered father, but the scurry of excitement among the children was not to be withstood. Mrs. Slocumb's food, however frequently sampled, was something of which one never got quite enough.

Abner slouched back to tell "her" to put a leaf in the table, while he sat and snickered at young Natupski thinking he could do any gum-shoeing in Holly.

Over at Natupski's Stanislarni was unstrapping his young trunk to get out a clean shirt and the other khaki trousers. He also combed Novia's hair and buttoned her dress, since it appeared that otherwise she would go out to tea with neither attended to. And he took Yadna to the sink and washed her quite thoroughly; with which example Stepan turned himself out shining with soap. So extraordinary was the result of all this preparation that Nancy Slocumb would by and by say to Abner, "Did you ever see such an improvement? It paid to have him go to college. Those young ones haven't looked so slick since 'Statia became Mrs. Donahue."

But just now there is one more scene with Kani, who

draws Stanislarni back, as he is marshaling the little crowd Slocumbward.

"It was in Poland," said Kani. "Dam' long time ago. You was born. Today. Dam' long time ago. So me make you gift. Because me never did yet."

He handed Stanislarni two dollars. The boy took it wondering.

"Thank you, father. So it is my birthday, but I don't really deserve money, when you have given me all the paper represents—a much greater present." He showed the bill of sale. Kani waved it away as mere dross and beamed at the two dollars.

"A gift," he repeated, "for your birthday. Jus' a gift."

Stanislarni went into the Slocumbs' dining-room with a heart mushy as the berries Mrs. Slocumb was lavishly spreading on the cake. He did not know that this sum, so sentimentally bestowed as a birthday gift, was actually his due considering the ten dollars he had paid his father on account of shooting the horse. Kani had done more business that day than purchase the transfer of Dick Perkins's contract. He had sold a horse's carcass to the glue factory. The price paid was two dollars.

VI

A 'MERICAN MARRIAGE

"LOAFER!" shrieked Kani Natupski, using the goad to lick himself into a real good frenzy. "Lazy picshure! What lets you always to sit down? Mamma, what does she do? Kicks the horse, that's what she do. And Wajeiceh the cow. Novia run after the chickens, awful fast. And Yadna smash wood and the barn under for the hen's eggs. And what do you? Wash yourself. Wash yourself! Hell!"

He addressed Marinka, of whom he had lately realized the truth that she had never earned her salt. Now she was sixteen he planned putting her on the hay rake. It was work warranted to displace most female internal organs in a season.

There being no grass down, Kani thrust a bucket of swill into Marinka's hold, and escorted her to the shack, where dwelt a magnificent sow and thirteen piglets.

"Stop!" he bawled, when Marinka was for dumping the odorous liquid into the noisome trough. "One who washes herself should know more better. In with you."

Sobbing with disgust, Marinka leaped into the slime and battled against muck. After feeding began Kani scratched the sow's spine and read his daughter a moral lecture.

"See you. How useful she is. Three times each year she pigs and thirteen at a lick. Even her diversions is

profitable. For a dollar each they sell without fattening. Years she does this, then to the butcher's for a fine sum. Clothes she wears none. Does she wash herself? Never! Take shame that of you I am less proud."

Marinka's underlip fell.

Down the road and into a kitchen prismatic with soap she sped, coming to a halt with the cry, "'Lo, Mrs. Tommy Donahue. I've come to ask you what next?"

Anastasia turned up her nose at the smell of pig and with her first words touched on the chief cause of trouble.

"Marinka Natupski, why don't you wash yourself!"

Marinka sank to the calico-covered lounge and whimpered. "That's just it. Papa says I sha'n't. He wants I should clean the pen."

'Statia stopped polishing the tea-kettle and gave her sister a good look over, then spoke oracularly. "There, just like I bet Tommy 'twould be when you done school. Now why don't you do like I did, 'Rinka? Buy yourself swell clothes and go places. Sure enough, hanging 'round papa's feeding pigs won't never get you nowhere."

"Swell clothes is nice," smiled Marinka. "Pink ones. And feather hats. And I love riding on trolley-car front seats when they go fast over railroad bridges. But—where'll I get the cash-money?"

"Didn't I say do like I did? Get a job o' work to some nice lady's."

Marinka sighed. Of course Mrs. Slocumb and 'Statia couldn't sympathize; they didn't have it so hard, they had men to give them money, they were married——

Married—that was it! Marinka saw a way out.

"Say, 'Statia," she observed, casually, "no old job o' work for me. I'm going to get married."

Whereat 'Statia insulted her by giggling and asking "Who's the feller?"

Marinka had no answer right ready, but just then there came from the barn a sound as of fifteen tin cans falling on to three iron stoves and bringing down seven ice tongs in their fall. At this Marinka followed the leading of the gods, and said "Oh—him!"

"Him?" 'Statia was quite incredulous. "Jeff Browne?"

"Uh-uh. A 'Merican beau. I guess papa can't kick 'bout a girl washing herself when she's a 'Merican beau."

"Good enough—when she got one," said 'Statia. "You don't know him. Bet yer yer don't."

Marinka wanted to depart in pride, but her need of 'Statia's help kept her meek.

"If I had swell clothes," she said, "he'd know me."

She hoped for the loan of a dress, but 'Statia was firmly set against spending her Tommy's small pay on papa's big family.

"G'long home," she counseled, "and cry a whole lot. Maybe papa notices it and gives you some cash-money."

It actually turned out that way. Kani, satiated with sobs, threatened to use the goad unless told the cause of the trouble. When he learned it was fifteen dollars he looked at the weapon and handed over five. At the same time he mused anent Marinka's younger sisters. In Poland one married a girl for no more!

'Statia helped with patterns and sewing-machine and Marinka thus became equipped for the subjugation of Jeff Browne.

To West Holly Jefferson was only a devilish noise coming along the road. Being the milk collector, intermediary between cow-keeping and monthly checks, no one could complain.

To little Marinka he was now become a King Cophetua. *A Mythical King of Africa*

At home Jeff was the family runt, of consequence only to his maiden sister Ruth, who loved him as a child cherishes the ugliest doll in the playhouse.

Ruth was the kind of girl who, when asked to take a buggy drive, went; but when the young man swore because the horse got its tail over the rein she plumped down on her knees then and there and began to pray. Still, the milk customers liked her because she kept the books intelligently, and had a little way of appending clever jingles to receipted bills.

Marinka reckoned without Ruth. Indeed, the Natupski girl did not realize that Jefferson was not the head and front of the milk business, in which the Browne family was doing well. That dignity was really old George Washington Browne's, whose hirsute face was well known as that of chairman of the board of selectmen, collector of Indian relics, and the only man in town who subscribed to the *Atlantic Monthly*. The active management, moreover, centered in W. Henry Harrison Browne, the third son, a plump bachelor of forty, who might be seen at any time between two and eight a.m., slumbering in a milk cart on the streets of Mifflin Grove. All that town took milk "off" Browne's, and it was presumed the horse delivered the bottles, as no one ever saw W. Henry Harrison awake.

The oldest son was town clerk of Holly, the next was

assessor; there was a daughter older than Ruth who had become a school teacher and ultimately married advantageously.

What Marinka knew of this made her endow Jefferson with all the virtues, civic and private, of his brothers and sisters.

Jefferson and Marinka might have met at the barn, chaperoned by milk cans, but it had been more romantically arranged.

Marinka had probably been always about in the Natupski crowd, but barelegged and elf-locked. So, when Jefferson saw her at Silver Lake Trolley Park it was as 'Statia had predicted. He didn't know her at all.

"'Lo, Jeff Browne," she called, as he swaggered by with a crowd of young fellows, all roystering, and all up a tree for some real excitement.

Jefferson did not hear, and Marinka's lip drooped.

One of the boys, noticing, inquired, "Say, Jeff, who's the skirt turning on waterworks for you?"

"Huh?" asked Jefferson.

"Dam' fine girl you icy-mitted. G'long back 'n' shout her to a soda."

Jefferson reversed, gave Marinka what he would term the onceover, and slouched to her side.

"S'cuse," he muttered, almost taking off his hat. "Didn't see yer before. Have a soda?"

"No, thanks," said Marinka, lifting her eyes, and then dropping the lids as one might curtains when the sun shone too dazzlingly.

Jefferson came nearer and took his hands out of his pockets.

"Awful glad to see yer here," he continued. "Come on. Le's have a dish ice-cream."

"I guess not." Business of eyes repeated.

"Gee, it was lonesome 'fore I seen yer. Say, won't you join me in a hot dog?"

"I don't care much about 'em."

Again the eyes.

Jefferson grasped her by the arm and propelled her through the crowd to the evil-smelling baby wharf where one might secure leaky boats at twenty-five cents an hour. He did not ask her if she wanted a row, but put her masterfully into the blue "Water Lily," removed his coat, waistcoat, collar, cuffs, hat, and tie, tied his suspenders about his waist, turned up his trousers, and shoved off.

All this time he had no idea she was a Natupski.

By the time he learned her family connections he had bought her a pound of good chocolates, a red, white, and blue cane having a fluff of pink tissue paper on one end, a hunk of popcorn, an ice-cream cone, and a dinner in the Epworth League tent. Also he had had his tintype taken with her.

After this Marinka felt she rightfully hailed him as her knight and her ultimate rescuer whenever he came to get her father's milk cans.

Jefferson never entered the Natupski home, having imbibed the opinion of Ruth that it was an abode of disease and vermin. Not that he feared either so awfully, but what he saw through open doors of lamp-lighted interiors never seemed attractive. Mrs. Donahue thought little of her sister's conquest.

"What kind a beau is it you got?" she asked with

scorn. "A young feller driving a milk team so he can't go out nights."

"Jeff's a nice feller," pouted Marinka. "He brings me candy-bag most every Sunday."

"Poh—eating stuff. That ain't nothing. Did he give you anything nice for wear? Silk stockings, maybe, or a gold chain-locket? Tommy bringed me a chain-locket the second time he come."

"Oh, Tommy Donahue ain't so much," cried Marinka. "Only a Polisher if he did get him a 'Merican name. Old Mr. Browne's folks been round here two-three hunder' years. He is always 'Merican. Rich, too. Me—I sha'n't live no little small house like this."

"Well," said 'Statia, briskly, "I only hope you have it half so nice. All same, don't take up with Jeff Browne because his papa so rich. He got lots brothers and sisters. 'Sides, me'n Tommy looked in tax book, and he not so rich as our tatulo, after all, and you know what he do for you."

Marinka clenched her hands in anger. Papa had ordered her that very day into the blackberry canes. She determined to go and spy out the land.

The next day, she managed to annex her two sisters, there being a temporary lull in blackberries, and a walk of four miles cross lots brought them to a part of town where the younger Natupskis never went. Coming up a pleasant crooked lane Marinka skipped into the road at a place where several wood-colored houses clustered about a white school. Bewildered, she gaped. Not another dwelling was in sight.

"Always I heard of the big Browne place," she told the others. "Over this way. Which is it?"

"Ask the man," said Yadna, who had positively no modesty in her make-up. "Hi, mister! Where's Mr. Selectman Browne's house?"

The passerby pointed with his thumb to the ugliest of the lot.

"That!" cried Yadna. "Why, 'tain't better'n papa's."

Indeed, it was not so attractive, the Judson Buckland place having been a fine mansion in its day and satisfactory in its ruin as a once beautiful woman is satisfactory in old age. This building stood up, too tall for its width, half clapboarded, unblinded, with no steps to the front door, no supports to the piazza roof. It was like a house some one had forgotten when partly built. Life there could be no better than 'Statia's, if as good. Marinka murmured, "I 'most as lieves feed pigs."

"Le's go home 'long the road," said Novia.

Marinka agreed, in listless chagrin. At a quarter of a mile distant the highway jerked itself around a sand-bank shoulder, and the girls descried something well worth observation. This mansion had retired from the tumult, as sufficient unto itself, and demanding a home lot of ten acres to breathe in. All alone it stood, 'mid a wide expanse of flower studded lawn, from which an occasional vase-shaped elm cropped up to cast beautiful flowing shadows away from the sunset. The third story, out-jutting, was supported by great pillars; the garret window was a work of art surrounded by a laurel wreath. Every window was hung with a muslin curtain of immaculate whiteness; on the piazza was a bevy of lounging chairs and rustic tables. At the rear huge barns and silos hinted at the means whereby this grandeur was supported. It needed not the painted legend "G.

W. Browne Stock Farm " on the biggest and reddest of the barns to reassure Marinka.

"There 'tis," she said serenely, and gloated.

"Whew!" breathed Yadna. "Guess they must be the rich persons. When it's yours will you give me one them curtains to make me a dress-up dress?"

Marinka gaped her fill, picturing herself lounging on the piazza in gold-heeled shoes. She guessed Tommy Donahue would never give 'Statia anything the bigness of that.

Now up to this period young Jefferson's courtship had been of the passive kind. He had allowed Marinka to climb into his wagon and had kissed her whenever his wide mouth wasn't busy voicing brags of his prowess at games of chance, wrestling, or getting the better of his sister Ruth. Shortly thereafter circumstances induced him to apparent increased initiative. She who had been Esther Browne, now Mrs. James A. Hoppin, arrived for her annual visit, and the Browne mansion assumed a fortnight's aspect of peculiar animation. Mrs. Hoppin lived in Yonkers, which almost implied New York. She said she "always shopped at Macy's," and it sounded very fashionable to those who knew not Fifth Avenue.

Esther had been the family beauty. Ruth resembled her as a blurred copy resembles the real thing. Before her calm gaze Ruth trembled, W. Henry Harrison woke up, G. W. reminded himself that he was chairman of the board of selectmen, and Jefferson ran away.

This year he had Marinka to run to. It was squalor, but Jeff preferred it to the present home atmosphere, where Esther was putting the whole family through a catechism to which one never guessed the right answers.

"Why don't you have some ambition and go to the Academy and save your money and keep out of bad company and cut the hair on the back of your neck and sit up straight and eat with your fork and make your ears lie flat and use less profanity?"

Good Lord, didn't old Es want a fellow to have any fun? Ruth fussed, but after all she could always be kept pleased if you remembered to whop the pious calendar she'd put foot of the bed.

Jefferson had a pretty good time at Natupski's, being foul-mouthed to his heart's content and smoking more than was good for him. Marinka sat very close and on the last evening of the fourteen her father referred to Jefferson as "Your boy" in a way that made the girl think she was formally engaged.

Then Esther went back to Yonkers and Jefferson told Marinka it was too far to walk and he was going home to pound his ear. It seemed to him a good enough excuse, but he was not dealing with an American father. The very next evening Kani Natupski invited him down from the driver's seat and the following conversation took place:

"You like Marinka? Yes. Marinka think you one grand boy? Sure. Marinka and you both get married each together? Say when."

Jefferson gasped like a fish suddenly taken from its native element, and muttered, "Oh—yes—she's one dam' fine girl—but I can't get married now. I ain't old enough. And my folks only give me a dollar a week and it goes for fine-cut. So I ain't fixed to get married. Honest, Mr. Natupski, I ain't."

"Tha's all right," beamed Natupski. "Marinka one

dam' girl. Sure." (He was perchance musing on a recent stormy scene wherein his daughter had declared with great spirit that she wouldn't husk corn if she died alive; and her father had sworn, with equal fervor, that she would either husk corn or see her father kill himself making her. Whereat marriage had been suggested as a compromise.) "How," Natupski went on, "next week Wednesday?"

"I can't," moaned the distressed youth. "Father wouldn't let me. And I ain't no new suit."

"Mebbe Saturday better. Sunday day off."

"Hell!" roared Jefferson. "I say it can't be done."

"Goo' by," said Mr. Natupski, turning toward the house. "Me tell Marinka. She real tickled."

Jefferson whipped the horse away. He almost made up his mind to go braking. Still, Marinka's vision had power.

Saturday he went early on the route. By nine o'clock he was stepping softly across the fields to the secret solemnizing of his own nuptials.

With the Donahues they drove to Mifflin Grove, where they were made one. Afterward a delightful supper of ice-cream, cake, and lager beer was enjoyed at a Polish restaurant. Then came the drive home. Everybody was pretty gay—everybody but Jefferson. He began to wonder what Ruth would do if she didn't find him in bed as Henry drove to the barn at eight. Putting the sleepy Marinka forcibly into the arms of the drowsy 'Statia he mumbled, "See you tomorrow," slid over the wheel, and was lost in the darkness.

"Darn his pictur," said Tommy Donahue, and then

began to laugh. "Anyhow, kid, you got your marriage lines?"

"You bet you," whispered Marinka, and clasped them in hands which she felt were now in no danger of growing callous at a cruel father's bidding.

Incredible as it may seem, Jefferson actually turned over his paltry dollar a week to his wife, depending on wheedlings of Ruth for his own pocket money! All would have gone well if the minx had promptly given this to papa, it being more than adequate for any board obtainable under his roof, but she must needs squander it for silk hosiery and a hat trimmed with most marabou.

One October afternoon Kani Natupski looked about and found the single drone in his hive of industry, sitting indoors, warming herself by a fire. The rest warmed themselves with work, Marinka must make a fire. To be sure it was only corncobs, of which bushels littered the yard, but it was contrary to any Natupski principle to have an October fire when you weren't cooking anything. He entered abruptly. Marinka had elevated her feet to the back of a chair, the better to admire pink silk legs. Kani gave a jerk both to that chair and the broken one in which his daughter sat. Abruptly she assumed a perpendicular position.

"Up and cook supper while she burns!" he shouted.

"It ain't only three," said Marinka. "We never eats till seven."

"What for if we don't? Cook it while a fire you got. There'll be no more."

He flung the cobs, basket and all, down the cellarway. Marinka began to cry.

"Shut up!" snarled her father.

"Tatulo, I'm cold."

Kani Natupski liked to be addressed by the Polish term for father, but now he was beyond wheedling.

"Where's some money?" he demanded. "He give you some last night."

"Only a dollar. I sent it in a envelope-letter."

"What after?"

"A—a real imitation diamond hair comb," she blubbered.

Kani falling into greater rage, Marinka got right up, packed her small wedding fineries, and departed while still a wisp of smoke hung over the chimney.

Now imagine the scene in that Colonial mansion when Marinka neared the south door. It was late afternoon, the sun was westering and lay in long rays on the tessellated hall, thence streaming into the small room where Ruth Browne sat making out milk bills. There was oil-cloth on the floor, giving shining evidence of being washed daily with milk and water. On the south wall ticked a banjo clock. Under it, in a Windsor chair, slumbered old Tom, with nine years and thirty-two toes to his credit. Ruth wore a plain dress of blue serge covered by a gingham apron. Her hair was smoothly braided and wound about her head. On her feet were ribbed stockings and ugly, expensive shoes minus heels. Jefferson was at the barn collecting cans, W. Henry Harrison slept in bed, and G. W. greased the delivery cart.

A poor outlook for a bride in search of leisure. Ruth looked up when a shadow fell across the ledger. Marinka had walked right in, as a son's wife should.

"Me and Jeff was married six weeks ago," she said. "I'm come to stay."

Ruth marked the moment by the one ledger blot of her existence, and went upstairs to wake W. Henry Harrison.

That somnolent individual being the prime mover in the family, he decided that the young couple must be set up housekeeping—say in father's old house—and given enough to live on—say, ten dollars a week. Only Jefferson must work for the money. No more sleeping until eight o' mornings.

It is difficult to tell the feelings of Marinka when she found herself installed in the very doorstepless house that had roused her scorn.

Jefferson was grateful for the matter-of-fact way in which his escapade was regarded, and for the first time in his life felt respect for W. Henry Harrison and sentiment for Ruth.

"Guess this is bad," he would chuckle, grabbing Marinka by the waist and chucking her to the ceiling a couple of times, such boisterousness being his idea of making love.

Marinka could not cook, of course, and she would not, even after 'Statia came over and showed her how. They lived largely on those convenient foods which come in cardboard packages with a waxed paper inner wrapping.

If, as often at first, she dressed up and made a visit to the big house, longing to play fine lady in the red-carpeted parlor, she was sure to find it a day on which they thought she should be at home.

"What—your washing out so early? You are smart!" observed Ruth the first time, which was Monday. Ruth was up to the elbows in suds, and set Marinka to stirring starch over the hot stove. The next visit was Saturday, when she was supposed to be baking, and

even Thursday was sacred to mending in the Browne calendar.

Jefferson became obsessed by the idea, too. "Shall I help you mix bread?" he would ask, like a boy with a new toy, so anxious was he to screw the mixer to the table edge. Ruth would have welcomed such domesticity, but Marinka did wish he could let her alone. She had planned to patronize the baker's cart when it passed next day. It was from that cart she obtained the sponge cakes which the deluded Jefferson supposed were his 'Rinka's own productions. And, oh, the subterfuges she was put to when he asked for them on days that the baker wasn't due!

One afternoon Jefferson, going from his father's house to his home, met the baker.

"Here's the order your wife was in such a stew about," said that worthy. "'F you'll take it 'twill save me driving that fur."

Jeff accepted the loosely-wrapped parcel, and walked on. A November wind fluttered the paper, and he saw what he was carrying. A sponge cake! He banged it so hard on the kitchen table that it fell in crumbs.

"They all said I'd married a slack-twisted runagate," he muttered, bitterly, "but I didn't know you was a liar as well. And me around bragging that even if you couldn't boil water without burning it, you could make sponge cake! I can stand a good deal, but, by God, I won't stand being made a fool of."

And, turning, he went supperless to his evening task of milk collecting.

Marinka had imagined she did not feel very well that day, but she was able to pack her clothes and the best

of the spoons, and get to 'Statia's before dark. The Donahues were but slightly sympathetic, and evidently anxious to avoid responsibility. Tommy hitched up and drove her to the Natupski house at once. 'Statia gave advice.

"If he is like you say, and scare you, then tell papa straight off no shinnaniganing. Have papa get a lawyer and sue for separate s'port."

"What's that?" asked Marinka.

When they told her she cheered up. "I get a set furs," gleed the deserting wife. She was forever forgetting her cruel father's cruelty, but Kani had not forgiven that October blaze set for the warming of pink silk stockings. He met her at the door, inserted her violently into the family circle now kitchen assembled, and roared, "Mamma, give 'Rinka 'tato sack apron. She in just time to cut sausage meat."

The place reeked with raw pork, which Kani was having prepared for a profitable market. Poor Marinka, then she ought to have regretted the too hasty leaving of her new kitchen and dainty bedroom. At any rate, the sight and smell of so much blood made her deathly sick and she fell into that same broken rocker in a faint. Kani, suspecting malingering, caught her roughly by the shoulder, but his experienced wife motioned him away with a grin. He was but a fool man, she said. Could he not see he was in a way to become a grandfather?

"Dam'!" bleated Mr. Natupski and staggered out. He supposed now she must be left to her mother.

So there came a fine day in June, which Kani welcomed largely because it brought an end to Marinka's immunity from toil.

In the meantime she made a terrible fuss. Even 'Statia, who followed the American fashion of no baby, agreed to that. Marinka moaned and implored the family to "kill whatever it was quick" for so long that a doctor was called—the first time one had been at Natupski's for childbirth. He declared the girl had gone flabby and must be made to exercise. 'Statia and Mrs. Natupski walked her up and down till they were worn out. Kani, herding the little children downstairs, felt a slight vindication. He knew she had refused to move many a time just to anger him.

"Supper ready, M'rinka," he had growled, and she had drawled back, "Oh, I'm too miserable to come down. Let the kids bring me something nice up." Well, she was paying for it—paying with much suffering, if he was a judge.

'Statia finally lost her temper. "For goodness," she said, "don't be so howlful. Think of all the little babies mamma borned."

"I am a-thinking," sobbed Marinka. "It makes me the worse every one I think of."

Finally the crisis passed and Marinka lay on the (reasonably) white pillows, the mother of twins—both boys. Even Kani was interested.

"You never done nothing so much," he grinned at grandmother Marinki.

It being necessary to feed and clothe twins, Jefferson Browne was called into court and ordered to give half his earnings to his wife. Lest Jefferson forget his duties, W. Henry Harrison Browne sent the sum weekly to the Natupski home. And naughty Marinka waited till she had accumulated eighteen dollars and bought a lace

dress and a green parasol. Unwise Marinka. Her parent, having learned the way to the county seat, stormed over so imperiously that the selectmen of Holly, headed by G. W. Browne himself, drove to Natupski's and removed the twins.

"The father'll take care of 'em," said G. W., after learning that his daughter-in-law was exhibiting her finery at Silver Lake.

The babies had already been christened Josef and Alexander, the elder Natupskis considering these a neat balance of claims between old Poland and new America. On the Sunday following their removal to the Browne mansion they were taken to the West Holly Methodist meeting-house and came forth Woodrow Wilson Browne and Grover Cleveland Browne. The Natupskis were angry, Kani principally because he hadn't thought of naming after presidents.

Jefferson looked with an awful fear at the two pink objects of his creation, but it was Ruth who snuggled the little ones, fed them according to wired advice from experienced mothers, sat up nights with them, washed their linen when she was so tired she wanted to cry. Sleeping at opposite ends of an oval clothes basket, propped on chairs beside Ruth, they gurgled aid in making out milk bills, and clients noted an unusual output of joyous poesy on the part of the maiden aunt. Still her cares were greatly increased by the existence of the marplots, she being of those who know not substitution when duties are concerned, but only addition.

In the meantime Mr. Natupski was too worried for discussing a daughter's affairs. The great sow threat-

ened a litter, and that was something worth sitting up nights and hiring a vet. for.

She outdid herself, and Mr. Natupski found himself the proud possessor of twenty-two little pigs. He wouldn't have taken off his hat that day to President Wilson, Paderewski, or Blanchard Bowes himself.

All very gleeful, but how were twenty-two infants to be fed at a maternal breast with accommodations for thirteen? Kani Natupski burst into a room where his daughter Marinka sat entirely surrounded by pink muslin. Her occupation appeared to be earnest contemplation of one sleeve, which her sister 'Statia had completed and pinned to the wall as proof that the paper pattern was practicable.

"Now sit and look at it till you know how to make the mate," 'Statia had said, and gone home. There was every indication that Marinka would take her at her word, if she sat there until next spring.

"Hey, 'Rinka, you got some bottle?" demanded her excited papa.

"What?"

"Some bottle. Baby bottle. Hurry pretty dam' quick."

"Certainly not," said Marinka, and fell to idly pleating a rosy selvage.

"Well, where is he? Two I buyed you. Where he gone?"

"You mean the twinses' bottles? Why, Father Browne took them with little Alec and Joe. You remember—that day I was to the Park."

Marinka was ostentatiously American with her

"Father Browne," even if equally alert to call her babies only by the results of their Polish naming.

Her languid elegance received a shock the next moment. She found herself whirled downstairs and deposited in the Natupski buggy, to which Wajeiceh was busily attaching the fastest Natupski horse. Soon Wajeiceh was in the driver's seat, fretting like a jockey before the shot.

"Like hell," was the father's direction to the boy. To Marinka he hissed, "At Browne's you talk up. Get what is yours."

Then, as Mr. Chick once advised, he went to see if something temporary couldn't be done with a teapot.

Thus Marinka made a second descent upon the G. W. Browne Stock Farm, but no blot ensued, for Ruth was not making out bills, only feeding the twins. It was fussy business, for one took a patent food, the other a diluted condensed milk. The maiden aunt presided over a large tray of droppers and shining bottles. She was better prepared for shocks than she had been; the advent of Marinka, still trailing a breadth of rosy muslin, only caused her to say "Sh!" and beckon the young mother into the next room, where G. W. gloated over a new relic.

"What?" said the old man, peevishly returning to the present from an entertaining past in which he had already been much disturbed by infantile wails. "She wants her property? Well, let her take it and go."

Two baskets were put into the buggy by the astonished Ruth. One jingled all the way and its glassy rattle joyed the heart of Kani Natupski. Here were whole dozens of feeding bottles. Already he seemed to see rows of super-

*Browne - see law of Mr.
Marinka -*

numerary piggies waxing fat. It would never have occurred to any but an American grandfather to buy out a drugstore, but Poland for once blessed New-World extravagance.

"Good. Good 'Rinka," he gleed, giving the girl praise for the first time in her small life. Then, "Other basket—what? More bottle?"

The other basket just then waked to sound, and it became evident that Marinka had of a verity fetched back all her property. Alexander Woodrow Wilson bawled and Josef Grover Cleveland kicked. Kani Natupski looked from the twenty-two pigs to the two babies, from the matronly sow to the flippant Marinka. The latter, well frightened at the unexpected end to the adventure, fell to her knees in the muck and begged tatulo not to strike her.

"I didn't go to do it, 'deed I didn't," she sobbed, with truth, for the food-sodden little ones never peeped, and she had had no idea what she was bringing home.

Her father helped her up with boot and hand. He took that strip of rose-hued fabric, tore it into eleven ribbons, attached a length to each twin, and with the other bits adorned the tails of nine tiny pigs.

"So you know 'em," he snickered. "G'long off. Get on to youse job."

And Marinka did! A boy's young life had been marred, a lonely woman was left more lonely, an exasperated court would presently refuse to interfere further in Polish-American matters, but—there was this noble result—Marinka worked! From infant to infant of the eleven she skipped, whenever—as generally—each squealed for the contents of its bottle at the instant every

other one was seized with hunger-pangs. Only once came a hint at flagging, when Mr. Natupski revived his daughter by a serene kick, a reminder that she had brought it on herself, and these sweeter words, "I say wrong long 'go, 'Rinka. I say of you than ole sow I was less proud. *Nie, nie!* For ole sow, this instant minute, she but tend thirteen. And none with shirt. Hist, 'Rinka, a runt lose hold. *Nie*, foolisher, not snub nose, snout. 'Member, 'Rinka, when all holler snub nose be put off, never snout. Snout bring cash-money soon. Snub nose be t'ree-four year 'fore he pick up tato. Me you hear, Rinka!"

Marinka heard. Marinka did as she was told. The Old World triumphed.

VII

LATHER AND FLOWERS

"PAPA," said Kazia, "would you be willing I should ask you to give me anything I want?"

"No," bawled her father, and kept right on with what he was doing. He always said no to any request made by a female member of the family so automatically that he often declined an invitation to his own supper. And he never looked up, because he knew they were going to cry.

Kazia was at it now. He could hear a piteous sniff-sniff above all the noise he was making by aiming a rack at the ox-cart and failing to hit the mark. It was terrible the effect this America had on womankind. Sometimes Kani almost wished he had stopped in Poland.

When Kazia had cried out what tears she could squeeze she rubbed her nose on the top of her stocking and said, as if in sudden discovery, "I'm going on sixteen."

"You shut up, you," bleated Kani, and resumed the rack.

Kazia had now a bright idea. She took hold of the other side and with her strong young arms guided the clumsy concern over the stakes. Kani was overcome with admiration and expressed it quite naturally.

"Dam' hellion, stand there all day and don't move.

Good mind to lick you for not doing so to help your papa before. Well, what d'ye want?"

Now what Kazia did want was a wedding outfit, for, not frightened at 'Rinka's stormy career, Kazia had embarked on her own romance, and only lack of a home and wherewithal to support it separated her from the lad of her heart. She felt her moral right to a few clothes and agateware pans, but dare she ask for what she wanted when she had gone through all three Hollys and Mifflin Grove, and pinned her young affections on Nicholas Kovinski, Jr.?

Wonderful schemes were woven by the young couple, snuggling in fence corners on summer nights. They would pretend to be in need of funds for some noble purpose, then elope "and get the old folks' goats fine and dandy," said Nick.

Here was Kazia, asked by her father what she wanted, and with no more impressive manner of answering than stammering "I—I—want some cash-money—to——"

Kani yanked a chain across the rack and said, "Cash-money it always is. For clothes always for dresses and silk stockings. Well, it sha'n't be. For clothes, no. For something else, maybe."

"Oh, I don't want things to wear," cried Kazia, blindly following any leading. "No. Never nothing like that."

"Well, what?"

"I—I want," she stuttered, looking for inspiration in the sky above and the mud below, "I—I want to go to some place away from here. I want not to live here always. I'm going on sixteen."

Kani looked gloomy. "Bet yer," he exclaimed.

"Bet yer that was how it would be when you made that grand graduation. Mr. Bowes say the same. You bet yer, Natupski, he say, such a fine girl she is won't stay long to West Holly. Well, all ri'. Go it. Go to Mr. Farrar's right now. Give name and ask what cash money is for carrying to trolley. Tell him your papa do it for twenty-five cent less. You can walk most times."

This needs explanation. Holly maintained no High School, but "farmed out" its scholars at Mifflin Grove. Kani Natupski proposed to underbid the price allowed by the town for taking a pupil from home to the trolley, and then to make that pupil walk.

Kazia understood this, but what struck special horror to her soul was the ghastly fact that he was going to send her to High School!

At a tryst with Nick she sobbed the awful news into his mercerized shirt sleeve, which was embroidered with a pink silk "N," for Olka Kovinski was right up to date in dressing her son. Perhaps that was one reason why Kazia loved him so dreadfully. Nifty clothes—even ordinarily clean ones—had an amazing attraction for any young person condemned to the Natupski way of living.

"Oh, Nicky," she wailed, "he's going to send me to High School. I wish I was dead this minute."

Nick said, "Suffering mush, that balls things up."

"Don't it? I told him I didn't want to live forever in West Holly, and he told me I could go to High School quicker 'n anything. I'd never have believed it. Nobody never would. He licked everybody when Stanis-larni went to college so we couldn't lie down easy for a week. And it takes four years to get through it. Oh, Nicky, I shall die."

"If I had ten dollars we'd go to Boston," said the valiant Nick, "and let 'em rave. If I had five dollars we'd go to Lansing."

"How much have you got?" asked the practical Kazia.

He had forty cents, which wasn't much toward house-keeping. So he planned to meet her the next day quite accidentally at a movie show in Mifflin Grove. Kazia got there while her papa supposed she was still being interrogated by the school board, and they were able to enjoy an ecstatic period of hand-holding throughout the "Perils of Pauline." She sadly related the particulars of the interview with Mr. Committeeman Farrar.

"He said he was awful glad 'cause West Holly hadn't had a High Schooler for as much as years. Said I was a good shame on American girls. And he gave me a paper so I needn't be examined. And I was hoping I'd be thrown out. Oh, I shall die."

"When you're dead it's a long time," said Nick. "I got a plan."

She thought it was for eloping on the spot, but it was nothing more thrilling than this—he too would go to High School!

In the meantime the fact that Kazia Natupski was going to High School set West Holly into a ferment. Some said it was a direct result of Stanislarni's going to college. Others put it down to worthy initiative on the part of the girl, in the face of home opposition. Mrs. Sabrina Perkins thought it a triumph for suffrage. Mrs. Blanchard Bowes consulted Mrs. Abner Slocumb as to whether the girl had anything to wear.

So "This is what I'd suggest, Kazy dear," said the

kindly Nancy, emphasizing each item by a thimble tap on the fence dividing Natupski's barren dooryard from Slocumb's mossy lawn, "half a dozen middies, at perhaps ninety-eight cents each, and you can wash 'em yourself come Saturday. No starch, which is a terrible advantage with a meddlesome baby underfoot, as there always is to your house. Many a child I've known thrown into convulsions through drinking hot starch for pudden. A plain serge skirt to accommodate 'em all. Whenever your pa feels free to give you the money I'll have Mr. Slocumb hitch up and drive us to the car. I can go with you well's not, and if I couldn't I'd take the time because I want to see you started right. You're a smart girl, Kazy, and we're all bound to be proud of you yet, I guess."

And Kazia murmured "Yes'm," with despair in her heart.

Mr. Natupski glowered, but in time reconciled himself to the extent of passing out a few dollars. The subsequent orgy of shopping had no joy for Kazia. What were the fabrics of Mifflin to one who lived only with her cheek snuggled against a Waterbury watch in the pocket of a fancy waistcoat? If it might have been a wedding dress, now——

The things were displayed on a clean sheet spread over the Natupskis' kitchen table. Mrs. Natupski grinned. This was her girl; she was tickled that Kani was doing for Kazia more than he had done for 'Statia, the other woman's child. 'Rinka thought they were pretty, but "Not so fancy. Why didn't you get something fancier, with nearsilk stockings? But I s'pose Mrs. Slocumb wouldn't let you. Not that she's got any taste. Always

looks like the back of a hack, she does." Novia wistfully fingered the soft lisle and said, "You're awful happy, ain't you, Kazia?" And Kazia gave Novia a push and replied, "I wish they was all at the bottom of the river. And I wish I was dead."

Nevertheless there was compensation when she made her trolley début on a crisp September day, wearing the blouse with red hip lacings and tie. This was very becoming to the brown complexion resultant from a summer at berry-picking. Nick whispered, "Say, you're a picture, you are."

After a month the fact that young Nick Kovinski was attending school in Mifflin leaked into West Holly.

"Too bad," said Kani. "Me you hear, Kazik. If he dares look to you spit his way."

His daughter was that instant thrilling in memory of the hand squeeze exchanged when Nick helped her off the car. It was safe enough to let him do this, because no Natupski horse was ever driven all the way to meet Kazia.

"The very devil's in it," Kazia told herself, in the augmented vocabulary acquired from associating with real nice girls in a Greek Letter sorority. "Never tried half a try and here I am class secretary and in line for Gawd knows what."

"That was a clever little girl you sent to us from West Holly," the assistant principal of the Mifflin High School said to the head of the Holly school board. "If you have any more such district school products we'll give them welcome."

The school board head said he heard from the West Holly teacher that few could equal Kazia Natupski.

"It's ambition, sheer ambition, that has made that girl what she is," he continued. "You know how keen the bright ones among those foreigners are to get away from their environment."

In the meantime Kazia certainly felt drawn away from her school environment, even while she sat at her desk and answered (quite correctly) the questions fired at her by well-dressed and refined teachers. This Kazia Natupski was a strange girl. The real Kazia ought to be bargaining for her husband's tobacco in a Polish grocery down by the jute mill.

"Why, Kazia, where are all your neat clothes?" asked Mrs. Bowes, nipping into the Natupski yard a few weeks after school ended. She was accompanied by a stern female, a stranger to West Holly, but well known in Holly Centre as the-woman-who-comes-here-summer.

Kazia had gleefully shucked all evidences of High School life, and was clad in shapeless garments of sack-ing.

"Whatever you may think," said Mrs. Bowes in a rapid aside, "she's a smart scholar and will well repay any effort made to help her. Nothing flighty about her, either, as there was about her two elder sisters. Both went boy-crazy when they were her age, and married. That's Marinka's twin she's tending now." Then turning to Kazia, "My dear girl," she cooed, "your faithful industry at school has not been unnoticed. Now you are to have a reward. Mr. Farrar has told your father, and he consents. This lady, Mrs. Tweed, lives in Eastfield. You are going to live with her and go to Normal."

Kazia put up a hand as if to defend herself from a blow.

"Dazed with joy," one lady told another. "Let us leave it to sink in. See you again, dear girl."

Behold Miss Kazia Natupski sitting down to her first meal in the home of Professor and Mrs. Tweed at Eastfield. Having arrived the night before the meal is breakfast. The Tweeds are poor and have furnished their house entirely with books and old china. Kazia had laid her head, for the first time, on a pillow slip of smooth linen. Rising she had been confronted by a real bathroom. So met she did something not always customary with her, and washed behind her ears. Later, when she learned what was really expected of one in a bathroom, she would run the water with loud splashings; and toward February she might venture on an occasional bath.

This morning Mrs. Tweed brought in the breakfast, which consisted wholly of a dish of mush. Kazia Natupski thought it a very good breakfast, and was much surprised when an omelette followed, with toast and coffee. She wondered if this was the way the Kovinskis lived, with butter-spreaders at each plate, and clean napkins. Her Nick ordered the waiter girls about in so lordly a manner when he took her to the Mifflin ice-cream parlors that Kazia could not believe any refinement of life beyond him. Perhaps living with the Tweeds would pay, in making her more worthy of Nick. Only why was it necessary to fuss with the Normal School?

Her ideals improved, working from the outside in. She didn't know they were ideals, she thought they were Kovinski requirements. She shuddered when she remembered how she had attended the Mifflin High—clean blouse and skirt outside, and rags sewed on for the winter

underneath. In time she changed as often as Mrs. Tweed herself, and cheerfully employed her Saturdays doing out her things in Mrs. Tweed's prim kitchen. Her future home, too, underwent metamorphoses, as her taste improved. When she had been in Eastfield a year she was picturing herself in a gingham gown and long white apron, looking out of a casement in a frame of scrim "Dutch cut" above a row of scarlet geraniums eternally in full bloom. Nick was coming up the path at the sunset hour, with a bit of a new moon over his shoulder.

And now came the great day when Kazia sent Nick a postal card bearing words "The Same." It meant she would stand at the corner of Walnut and Greenock Streets, in front of the Baltimore Lunch, at 2:30 p.m. the following Saturday.

Alighting from the Eastfield car Kazia took her stand at the trysting place. She was rather too early, and in a few moments became aware that her situation was not a happy one. Rude people stared and jostled.

A flash youth drew near. He had bad shoes and a hat like an unkempt green plush kitten. Kazia had a moment in which to realize his necktie—yellow hand crochet, she made it herself in High School—when he stopped and exploded, "Well, kiddo, how's tricks?"

It was Nick, with the charm of voice and lazy grace that first won Kazia. They still had power. She forgot the possibility of meeting Eastfield people, allowed him to take her elbow in a masterful grasp and steer her into a restaurant.

Nick ordered dinner à la carte, when he didn't mean that at all, but it cost a quarter and included pie and

coffee, so it must be worth the money. The napkins were the color of the beverage and inscribed "Stole from the Welton Lunch" in red chain stitch. Nick stole his and informed Kazia it made up a dozen "for going to house-keep with."

"There," said he, "now we've fed our faces, where next?"

Kazia suggested a walk in the park. It was the sunset hour, the sky was flecked with tiny pink clouds like rosy feathers shed from the wings of cupids.

"Nix," said Nick. "I've just been marking time. I got a dandy plan. Listen! I'm going to take you home. You and mamma got to be pals."

Kazia's heart stopped beating. "Does your mamma—suspect?" she gasped. She should have put on her best underclothing! Only the moral support of a handmade camisole with real Mechlin edgings could brace one for a thing like this.

"Sure. I told her. That is, I told her I was going to be married. When she begins talking about Mamie Top-floor I says I has a steady. Didn't say your monaker was Natupski. 'Twasn't necessary."

The Kovinskis now lived in Mifflin Grove, not far from the mill, where father and son worked, but too far for any confusion with tenements on the corporation.

The vestibule was done in a kind of fancy oilcloth that imitated marble, and Mrs. Kovinski had ever a damp cloth ready to wipe off the indecent scribblings of neighborhood youngsters. Kazia was allowed but a moment to take in this grandeur. Nick used a latchkey and she was left to tremble in the parlor while he sought his mother in another part of the flat.

How beautiful she would have thought it had she been debouched therein direct from papa's house in West Holly. The carpet was red, with a border. The walls were blue, with a cut-out frieze. Nobody could count the colors in the glass dome over the electric light. Under it the center table displayed so realistic a leather scarf that one could trace the shape of the denuded calf's legs in the dangling corners. There were books in the room, too: all of Laura Jean Libbey and much of Albert Ross. The concertina, once constant companion of the elder Nick Kovinski, had been replaced by a Victrola. The Kovinskis were right up to date.

Mrs. Kovinski—Olka, who had considered herself a Natupski—simpered into the room, bringing an impression of hair dye and tight corsets. Kazia saw her nails. They were black.

Throwing herself at a platform rocker in crushed plush, she began to tilt and talk.

"Nicky, darling, go open some beer. How do you do? I was sure surprised when Nicky tells me and his papa he is got a steady. We was thinking of a Miss Leary, top floor. But of course he has it like he wants, same's he always has. It's on the fire escape, Nicky. Push the cat off careful if she is put her kitten in a empty. That little cat, she gets all places. Would you believe it, my dear, Nicky's papa can't cut off a slice cheese sometimes because she must have it for a bed? Nicky, the opener is in the dish towel drawer, or maybe it ain't. Well, my dear, Nicky don't tell me nothing about you. Do you work out?"

Kazia did not need to reply, because Nick entered, bearing perspiring bottles, also three red and white tumblers

which he carried neatly with his fingers thrust down their insides.

"Have some, my dear. Oh, have some. My Nicky never drinks nothing else. I say it is strong enough for young folks. The little cat will lap it, too. You ought to die laughing to see her take it from a spoon. Well, Nicky, you tell her about the grocery?"

"Nix, ma, left explanation stuff for you."

"Well, Nicky don't take to the mill, so he thinks he like to keep a grocery. There ain't nothing like a good little grocery to make a couple young folks happy. Get a basement place, bundle wood round the door, can stuff on shelves, cash register, and penny candy case. Your papa, Nicky, know where to get those signs awful cheap for most nothing."

"No Trust No Bust," nodded Nick, "and No Change Penny Short."

"And a nicer one—Trust in God but Sell for Cash. For American customers. Goes great. Ain't no reason, is there, Kazy—Nick tells me you is called Kazy—why Armenies should have all grocery snaps?"

"It'll be a dandy," said Nick, ardently banging his check knee against Kazia's blue serge one. "We'll live in back, and have a buzzer on the door so you can step out and see what's wanted. Course I shall have to be going down the line a lot with cracker drummers."

"Nicky say—shove that dead soldier out the way, Nicky, and open me a new one—that you ain't got nothing to help make a start, but that's all right. Nicky likes you and we always gives him what he's after. His papa stocks up and pays a month rent in advance. And I get you some clothes better than what you is got.

Something bright you should wear and a rat under your hair. Men likes to see their womens dressed up. Hey, Nicky? ”

Kazia saw something beautiful in all this, though her year's growth of good taste was offended. Nick's mother, by her bland glances of absolute confidence, showed the perfect feeling of oneness that existed between herself and son.

Mrs. Kovinski arose with difficulty, owing to tight clothes and a ballast of beer, tottered across the room, lovingly twitched her boy's necktie crooked, and left the lovers to talk over their good fortune.

Nick, who had been so dull under the sunset sky, could make love comfortably in this garish parlor. He matched Kazia's fingers against his own, and regretted that they couldn't hire a hall for the wedding, owing to her father's hatred of the Kovinskis. It was an awful shame, because, while a hall let you in for one hundred dollars, what you took in presents and for the bride's dancing privilege more than made it up.

Of course Kazia did not enjoy this! Oh, but she did enjoy it. Trifling offenses against refinement were overlooked. Habits of girlhood resumed power. She thought it was dear of Nick to be wearing the dreadful necktie, because she had made it. Besides, it was not so very dreadful.

Dutch curtains or compressed yeast signs—what mattered it which decorated the window when through it one's love was to be seen?

There was nothing fluid about Kazia, though Mrs. Tweed would have thought there was. She had stuck to her original determination, which was to marry Nick

Kovinski, through a year at High School and another in the Normal. Her first wish had been to bring herself up to the Kovinski standard. She had gone a little beyond, but it was easy enough to drop back.

Memory, Nick's kisses, girlish curiosity, all had power over Kazia. The idea of marrying Nick was bound up with her life; it could not be eradicated without havoc such as is made when a blossoming vine is torn from a tree. And she knew there must be compensations in married life, or so many would not scheme for it. Even Mamma Natupski, with all her hard work and many babies, seemed perfectly happy, though papa touched her up with the goad.

It grew late, and Kazia must get the car for Holly, since some of the family would drive to meet it. A well-kissed Kazia she was, and after a year in the Tweed atmosphere a kiss was to her what one cocktail is to an unbranded stomach.

"Mamma," bawled Nick, shaking the portières until their brass rings jangled, "Kazik got to go."

"Too bad," said Mrs. Kovinski, rubbing her rouged cheeks to apparent erysipelas. "You shouldn't told nobody to meet you. Nick's girl could stay here nice as not. A spare room we don't fix, but just so good a bed is the bath tub as anybody wants."

Proudly she displayed it. A feather tick filled the tub. At one end lay two pillows in lace-edged slips. The faucets had been plugged with putty. There was no slightest danger that any one in the Kovinski household would take a bath.

Mrs. Kovinski felt great pride in thus utilizing an otherwise wasted room.

But Kazia had to go, and went, escorted by Nick and followed by an adjuration to walk round by Alder Street and see the basement. It was one of those places approached by three downward steps, and having a third of a window above ground. Alder Street was the center of a Polish settlement. Kazia could almost see herself, a few years hence, in the youngish women sitting on curbstones thereabouts. She longed to stop fussing over her physical self, and to just sit round feeling in her arms a warm lump of fat which she had made.

At papa's house in West Holly, where a parlor furnished with celery boxes was presented as an apartment of perfect propriety, Kazia was not very contented, but that made her the more enamored of Nick. Only love could make up for the loss of what Eastfield represented.

Kazia awoke at the end of a week feeling out of sorts. Three days later she stopped eating, and lived only on what nourishment might be found in chicory. The cause was not papa's uninviting table, because she could not eat when Mrs. Bowes invited her to tea, though Mrs. Bowes offered flaky biscuits, orange pekoe infusion, and the chocolate layer cake which Kazia had once described as "my favorite vegetable."

Sleep next deserted Kazia in the cluttered room which she shared with Yadna.

"What's matter of you?" 'Statia asked. "You got no life and your face is pasty-faced. Mamma thinks you is too stuck-up to eat the grub. I don't blame you there, but why can't you rustle up some raspb'rys for yourself? You used to be pretty good at such doings. I s'pose you'll get so much as nine dollars a week teaching school?"

Kazia had her lips open to cry out that she would never teach school, even though there had come a letter from Mrs. Tweed saying she had better come back at once and hasten the time of graduation by entering the summer session. She lacked energy for the argument that would follow announcement of her real intentions.

Believing herself sick for a sight of Nick she went boldly to Mifflin Grove one afternoon, but the experience was ghastly. His kisses had lost savor. Mrs. Kovinski expressed concern at her appearance.

"Looks like a sickness was coming on you," she said. "I bet you your papa's house ain't no place to be nursed up in. So if you want to come here I and Nicky would get you good steak and onions and fried oysters and bakeshop bread. The nice little bed in the bathtub is ready."

When Kazia shivered awake that night, back in West Holly, Mrs. Kovinski's words were right before her, in front of a silly old moon. "Nice little bed in the bath tub." Half horrible they were, half tempting. She was repeating them to herself later when out in the road she met Susy Perkins. Susy was now in High School, and she wanted Kazia to come and help her in a "theme."

Once it would have meant something revolutionary for a Natupski to enter the Perkins house by any but the back door, but Kazia was now considered to have lived down her family.

"Subject's fierce," said Susy. "This new poetry that don't jingle. Ma got me a book to study. Listen to this for a title—'The Bath.' Wouldn't that jar you?"

She read, as prose:

"The sunshine pours in at the bathroom window and bores through the water in the bath tub in lather and flowers of greenish white. It cleaves the water into flaws like a jewel and cracks it into bright light."

"What?" cried Kazia, in a briskness foreign to her tone since rounding Holly Mountain.

In conscientious monotone Susy repeated:

"The sunshine pours in at the bathroom window and bores through the water in the bath tub in lather and flowers of greenish white. It cleaves the water into flaws like a jewel and cracks it into bright light."

"Oh, excuse me," said Kazia, "I can't stop any longer."

"And she went," asserted Susy, "as if she had seen a germ! When I hustled to the door and asked when she'd be back she said, 'Probably never. I'm going to Eastfield to be a school teacher.' Just as if everyone didn't know that!"

VIII

WHENCE COME THESE BLOOMS?

IN the sweet springtime of that year in which Kazia Natupski discovered the imagists Kani Natupski sat at breakfast grumping over his chicory infusion.

Taking account of stock he saw that daughters had not gone well. Anastasia had made a fool of herself marrying American fashion. 'Rinka had put herself out at interest and returned with dividends, the twins. This was not doing badly, still little boys must be carried at a loss a long time in this country. Kazia was away at school—he had never thought much of Kazia, because she was not pretty. Novia followed. He decided something might be done with Novia. Plus a dowry, Novia should marry rich. Novia should be made blissfully rich if he had to beat her into it.

As a fit prelude he ordered her into the field to drop potatoes. He was feeling very independent this spring, for Stanislarni had gone west to buy new auto trucks. When the dormitory on the campus was finished, and the last of the thousand cords of wood had been delivered in Mifflin, Stanislarni found himself established in a business. All the Hollys wondered how they ever got along without an auto express, and West Holly began to grow prosperous because of securing what it had hitherto lacked, a market for its products. So, though the "business" was not one he would have chosen, Stanislarni

proceeded to develop it. Just now Wajeiceh was in charge, and Kani could not deny a feeling of freedom in the absence of his big eldest son.

One afternoon, at about this time, the Natupski family was under discussion at a meeting of the Woman's Club in Mrs. Bowes's parlor. A social worker, who had been imported, at considerable expense, to give a talk on "The Needs of the Rural Sections," seemed to enjoy being side-tracked into consideration of the Natupskis.

"The fascinating problem, as I see it," said she, with her settlement center, high-salaried brightness, "is how to lay hold of and influence this man. He has been within your gates for many years and still remains an alien. Is it not so?"

The Woman's Club nodded one head.

"In my opinion the best bait is daughters." She spoke with emphasis. There was a Minotauress-like gleam in her eye. "He has daughters?"

Oh, yes, the Club replied; he had daughters. But it was well known that he had never been open to their influence.

"You see," explained Mrs. Bowes, "Mr. Natupski is a Polander. Perhaps Polanders' daughters—your experience, Miss Nettleton, has been with——"

"Russian Jews and Italians. Oh, certainly. And our invariable rule, which always works, is to bait with daughters." She leaned back in her chair and beamed, then went on, in fuller development, "We aim to touch the sweet sentiment which exists in every nature, however outwardly crabbed. We find a daughter and intrust her with seeds. She plants them. The father takes interest. Whence came these blooms, my daughter? A

kind lady gave me the seeds, instructed me in their culture. She shows me so many improving things, papa. May I not adopt them in the home? The father, softened, lets gratitude go out to those who have helped his child. It is the little leaven, you know." She beamed again.

The Woman's Club considered until Mrs. Perkins exclaimed "Piffle! The little leaven, if 'twas that number female Natupskis, couldn't do so much. His oldest girl went to her home from my house with every intention of becoming a ministering angel, but got sick of her job and married the first chance she got. And no wonder. Imagine that man saying to any of them, 'Whence come these blooms, my daughter?' I pass the house often and I know what he says to 'em."

Miss Nettleton's jaw set for an argument, but just then the auto came to take her to the station, and the next ten minutes passed in tea and twaddle. Her words gained weight only when she was gone.

"After all, it's her job," said Mrs. Bowes. "She must be a dab at it if she gets that salary. Suppose we offer the young people of West Holly free seeds and promise a prize for the best posy bed tended by a girl? My Helen and your Susy can go into it, Mrs. Perkins, to take the curse off. I thought I had made some impression on that Natupski man when I got him to acting so docile over Kazia's being sent to school, but ever since April he's been a regular savage. Glares at me whenever I go by as if I'd done him a mortal injury. And there's 'Rinka becoming a perfect drudge; while little Novia can't be rescued in Kazia's fashion, because Miss Greene reports she's just a sweet, pretty little dunce."

Mrs. Perkins didn't think much of the plan, but the

West Holly habit of deferring to any Blanchard Bowes opinion had infected even the Woman's Club. On her way home Sabrina paused before the barb wire behind which a cross section of Natupskis dropped potatoes. But the glittering prospect of perhaps winning a five-dollar gold piece for skill in floriculture made no appeal. Yadna's comment was a roar.

"Nix, marm, nix. Nothing doing for little Yadna. No thank you, marm. I'm out for stuff, I be, an' you may please put that in your ole gray bonnet. Quarter acre papa is give me for my own and into onion she goes. Good moneys in onions. But honest, Misses Perkins, you wouldn't believe what a hell of a time I had to find manure."

Mrs. Perkins wished Miss Nettleton was there to hear. Yadna went on to further explain her plan.

"With onion money I gets me a little small pig. Swill I save for it right now. Is you got any you ain't using to your house, Mrs. Perkins?"

Feeling that as usual she had run against a stone wall in trying to improve a Natupski, Mrs. Perkins was about to go on, when an unkempt head upreared itself from a bushy corner, to be assaulted with stones and rough words.

"Wake up, Miss Stick-in-the-Mud. Novia shirk, will not work."

Mrs. Perkins looked with special interest on the "sweet, pretty little dunce" of District Seven, and saw that since she had last observed her carefully the girl had indeed grown in beauty, though she seemed neither clean nor energetic. She rubbed her eyes with dirt encrusted fingers, to the demoralization of all the hygiene she had

been taught by Miss Olive Greene. Then she smiled shyly and let the vigorous Yadna shoulder her against the barb wire.

"Ouch, your finger's torn!" cried Mrs. Perkins, wincing in sympathy, but Mr. Natupski, from his position in listening distance, said "It's a never mind" in a tone that augured small possession of that "sweet sentiment" which, according to Miss Nettleton, existed in every nature, "however outwardly crabbed."

Before leaving the Bowes mansion Mrs. Perkins had provided herself with the gaudiest of seed catalogues. This she handed to Novia.

"See how pretty," she said, pointing to a pictured parterre in which violets, zinnias, asters, and chrysanthemums mingled to a fine disarrangement of seasons.

Mr. Natupski made a long arm and snatched the book from his daughter.

"Huh!" he said to page after page, ruffling it rapidly from cover to cover, and then holding it out. Mrs. Perkins reached, but so mincingly, for the Natupski barbs were sharp and the Natupski hands were dirty, that the book fell to the ground. As it was on his side Mr. Natupski stooped to pick it up and appeared to get fixed in that position. He stooped so long that Mrs. Perkins stepped nearer and peered through the fence. Then he straightened and began to question. Could his girl truly have seeds, just what she wanted, and as many as she liked?

Mrs. Perkins nodded assent.

"All ri', Novia," he exclaimed. "Don't you see the lady's got a hurry? Speak quick. What you like?"

"S—sunflowers," jerked out Novia, choosing thus because she had a dim idea papa would be pleased at something hens would eat.

Mrs. Perkins laughed, the sunflower having no æsthetic value in West Holly. For this, or some other reason, Mr. Natupski voiced a veto.

"Wait minute," he said, sweetly, to Mrs. Perkins. "Excuse, please, while I speaks Polish. *Poppies, daughter, poppies.*"

"*Poppies, tatulo* (father)?"

"*Yes. Tell the ugly old woman poppy seeds. For an acre.*"

Not knowing Mr. Natupski's description of her, Mrs. Perkins spent the time pitying the poor alien. He was perhaps homesick for whatever posy he had loved in Poland. It might be the bluebell. She remembered something of bluebells in Sienkiewicz.

Novia again opened her pretty lips.

"Please, marm," she lisped, "it is poppies I would like. An acre."

"An acre of poppies!" Mrs. Perkins was startled, even while glad the flower selected was one that would probably succeed in West Holly soil.

"I give her ground for so much," said Mr. Natupski, taking off his hat with a tardy politeness. "It shall be nice. So far as looking, this way, that way, poppy."

Mrs. Perkins was delighted. "Get the ground ready at once," she said, as she started toward home. "I promise you all the seed Novia can want."

The next day, while gleefully giving each member of the Woman's Club a separate description of the inter-

view over the 'phone, Mrs. Perkins was interrupted by her daughter Susy, who remarked, "Say, ma, one of those nasty Natupskis was here and left this."

"Susan, your language is more objectionable than its subject. What did the child want?"

"She was not a child. She was Novia and she's as old as I am. And whatever she wants, she needs a tub. It strikes me funny, ma, that after you've raised me fussy, so I'm expected to wash any time I've no other pressing avocation, you haven't one-half the interest in me that you have in those Polish impossibles. Here's the message. I call it too degenerate for firewood."

Miss Susy flounced out, rejoicing in having gotten three large words and a good measure of home truth into a single speech.

Mrs. Perkins gazed at the shingle, on which appeared a printed word. By reference to a botanical encyclopedia she discovered it was the name of a certain variety of the poppy family. She understood—but wasn't that Natupski man cleverer than one might think?

Or was it the sort of poppy that grew in Poland, which, in West Holly, was to rouse the best sentiments in the hitherto flinty Kani Natupski? She believed it was. Over the growing of these poppies he would find growing in his heart a love for his home. Never again on barren ground would fall the West Holly ladies' advice, so often repeated, to effect that it wasn't wise to beat one's daughters or starve one's family now in the cause of a future fortune, or expect virtue and moral beauty to thrive in dirt and neglect.

The poppy seed came, after a trifling delay (the warehouse explained that it was a rather large order), and

Mrs. Perkins took keen interest in seeing Novia's slender form always bending over the black earth. Mr. Natupski certainly was doing the thing splendidly. This poppy field seemed better fertilized than any other in his domain. She tried to establish friendly relations with Novia, but the girl did not like to talk. At times she did not understand what was said to her.

"You love this work, don't you, Novia?" Mrs. Perkins remarked one hot June day. "My Susy says she sees you out here in the very earliest morning, when she is doing her barefoot dew stunts."

"No'm," murmured Novia.

"You mean, of course, that you are just looking forward to seeing it in blossom. It will certainly be lovely. You won't regret any of the back-aching then."

"Yes'm," said Novia.

"What? Oh, well, I see. And your father excuses you from the farm work so that you may be a little lady gardener. It is kind of him, is it not, Novia?"

"No'm," came again from Novia's close-pressed lips. Mrs. Perkins walked off. Poor girl, she was either stupid or sulky. Probably the former, as she gave all the wrong answers.

When the poppies bloomed it was a sight for sore eyes in West Holly. An acre of poppies, glowing as bits broken from sundowns and dawns, trembling on their slender stems in response to the tiniest of breezes, inviting bee-kisses from miles around. Whatever Mr. Natupski had planned for his daughter's poppy field, it attained fame. Fanny Atwood, who reported the town for the *Hamson Chronotype*, cut herself short in a most important item beginning "This week there are not many week-

end visitors who are spending any of the week in West Holly," and wrote a long "piece" about poppies which was part Edison's Encyclopedia and part the Natupski field, and which came out with a hanging indentation head on the first page. Madella Magee, who clerked in the Post Office and eked out a living by snapshots, crochet edging and shirtwaists made to your own measure, took a photograph of the field, and by and by it came back on a mendacious post card, claiming, despite the war, to be "Printed in Germany," with all the colors wrong, and sold like hot cakes. Abner Slocumb and the rest of the farming fraternity scratched their heads and allowed 'twas queerer'n Dick's hat to see such a lot of land given up by Natupski to a crop of positively no use.

Novia had answered Mrs. Perkins in perfect truth. She hated poppies. Because of poppies she worked a great deal harder than any previous year.

To a man working with Novia's advantage in view, the behavior of Novia was exasperating. Sometimes her father felt she would be no good unless she felt the lash stinging about her legs. He might have to give her a beating—later on, when work was not pressing—unless the poppies were tended faithfully, and each capsule pricked at the proper time.

This gave added reason for hating poppies, and Novia crouched in the field, hating with all her feeble might, one afternoon when a man on a piebald pony trotted from the cross roads and paused to admire.

"Well, of all things," he said, gravely, speaking to the pony (since Novia he could not see). "An acre of poppies. Beats creation."

He leaned over the wall and plucked a handful.

"H'm. Sliced already. Lots of heads cut. Bangs the bush!"

When Novia heard the bush mentioned she stirred, thinking herself seen, so that he did see her, and took off a larky looking felt hat that was the reason for a line separating peach-blow from bronze across a Roman nose.

"The Natupski poppies?" he queried, brusquely. Novia was cuddled among the flowers, he took her for half her age. She nodded wearily. Another to want to know all sorts of things, she supposed. Papa would be angry. He was always angry, because whatever she said was never the right answer. She would say nothing to this one. Still it was disappointing when he simply remarked "Sposh!" and rode away. However, the road he took led only to Jackson's Summer Boarders Accommodated and in an hour he rode back and stopped for another look.

Novia had improved her time. She had gone home and washed her face. She did not stop to convince herself there was any need of doing so, she just washed it.

He took off his hat immediately, because he saw Novia was a girl, not a little girl. He spoke as one well established in friendly relations.

"You think they're dreadful handsome," he affirmed. "I'm told you're out here every day and all day."

Novia nodded "yes" to the second statement.

"I bet there's a hundred shades of color," he went on. "Bet there's twenty-five reds and yellows. As to counting 'em—old Rockefeller can try it when he's practised counting his dollars. Miss Natupski, you are one wonderful girl to have done all this. I guess no one in the neighborhood has your love for posies."

"I hate 'em," she said briefly and let it go at that. If he wanted to stay and talk to her—and very much she wanted him to want to stay and talk—he must understand the truth. Despite her hatred of them, Novia hadn't lived among poppies all summer without learning a good deal about them, and while the pony's master was mentally staggering under her blow she poked about until she found a certain specially beautiful blossom. It was rose red, and no mere onlooker could have seen it, modestly hidden among flaunting blooms.

"For me?" he asked. "Oh, thank you. It's a top-notch, it is. You ought to seal the seed up separate and put it on the market with the title Miss What's-your-name Natupski."

"Novia, I'm called."

"Oh, Novia Natupski. Say, that's a slick name, with apt alliteration's artful aid, as we used to recite. I'm Bert Sears. And I'll keep this posy——"

He was about to name some lengthy period, as a couple of eternities, when the pony saved him any possible prevarication by eating the poppy and then trotting away in roguish fear.

"Oh—sposh!" Mr. Sears was compelled to shout and cut down the road.

Novia called that evening on her eldest sister and borrowed a pair of corsets. Furthermore she appropriated the pink silk stockings that alone remained of Marinka's sensational trousseau. With Kazia's shoes hiding the ragged feet and Yadna's white dress pinching the stays Novia took up her customary watch. Despite her glory Bert Sears knew her as far off as he could

see, and removed his hat that far, too. And held it in his hand during a two hours' dawdling talk.

"The pony's out to grass," he began. "I couldn't risk his appetite on any more gifts."

Feeling the moral support of her sisters' clothes, Novia smiled. She was very pretty when she smiled. She had been smiling when her father first got the idea she would be worth earning a dowry for. Sears vaulted to the wall! his neat tan shoes and white thread socks dangled beside the pink silk and shabby canvas. Novia knew he was the finest man she would ever see.

"We look pretty gay this A. M.," said he, perhaps referring to finery and perhaps to poppies. Novia chose to think poppies.

"I'm dead sick of poppies," she whispered. "I'm only sixteen. They ought to be gay. They've got all my summer."

Sears seemed to understand. "Poor kid," he said, "I don't blame you." He took her hand and patted it softly. Then, "Why in tunket," he inquired, "did you set out such a monstrous garden for?"

"Tatulo, he told me I should."

"Tatulo?"

"Papa—Mr. Natupski."

"Oh! Your pa is powerful fond of flowers, I guess."

"He ain't. He throws out always the geranium slips we has in tin cans winters. And a lady told me—Mrs. Slocumb it was—when my papa bought the farm there was piazza vines and bushes with roses on, and he pulled 'em up quick before even mamma should get here from Poland."

A queer smile curled about Sears's mouth, as if he had

never believed the Polander was raising poppies for fun.

Then he supposed seed was to be saved for sale.

"I suppose it will be slathers of work keeping the colors separate."

"How?" asked Novia, bewildered. "Oh, no, mister, I won't have to sort out no colors. I guess I would be crazy if I must do that. A funny man buys the poppy juice off papa. He had a hair braid, but he talked good as you and me. I guess he is what they call a Chink."

"I guess you're right, Miss Novia Natupski," said Mr. Sears.

Then he laid her hand on the sun-warm wall and deliberately rolled a cigarette, which he just as deliberately did not smoke, but deposited carefully in a waistcoat pocket. He also said "Sposh!" It was not an exclamation, but a question, fired into the universe.

Then he stopped harping on poppies and spoke to Novia of herself. He learned about her career at school, and her gentle regrets that she need go no more, being "over age." She told of girlish plans, which proved girldom to be girldom, in whatever nationality bred. Perhaps that was why he kissed her when he went away. Perhaps that was why he no more than kissed her.

Novia watched him Jacksonward, then threw herself among the poppies, crushing their brightness on her lips as if to absorb each hue.

Her father, coming out to gloat, thought her sleeping, and was about to enforce his "Up, lazy loafer," in the usual way when Novia sprang to her feet and looked at him with such transfiguration of beauty that the little stunted man felt stunned.

"Darling poppies," cried the girl, "I love you. Awful much I love you."

Turning suddenly on her father she flung her arms about his grimy neck, sobbing, "And, darling papa, I love you, too. Awful much I love you."

Kani hardly knew his daughter and could only gasp, "What's doing? What's tickling you, Novia?"

"Oh, I feel so good. This is awful nice farm, and you awful nice papa."

"Huh?"

"Yes. Why, papa, I even love that biggest pig. She awful nice pig."

Mr. Natupski would have inquired more fully into the cause of Novia's glee, but for being distracted by the sudden entrance on the scene of practically half West Holly. Talking, too.

"Say, Natupski, you didn't ought to have did so, you know. Giving the neighborhood a bad name." This from Hiram Farrar.

"The devil, Natupski, you shouldn't branch out into big biz 'thout consulting somebody 'r other. I'd 'a' told you what for," came from Abner Slocumb.

Mrs. Bowes screamed, hysterically, "We give you up from now on. The Woman's Club gives you up."

Mrs. Perkins was there wringing her hands and her handkerchief.

"Grand argument for anti-suffrage," piped Solomon Russell. "Let the females keep to tacking bluebirds on barn doors, while we men folks run things good like we always done."

Mrs. Perkins flounced off. Slocumb tried to explain to Natupski his near-crime.

"You see," he said, "all those pieces in the paper called attention to that poppy field. And a fellow has been snooping round some time—Sears, he's called. Boards with the Jacksons. I surmise he's some sort of a detective. A few minutes ago he called Mifflin Grove on the 'phone, and told what he'd worked out—that you was selling poppy juice to a Chinaman. And the Chink—he'd got the name—is under suspicion of some unlawful dealings in opium. Ain't much doubt what your poppies was going to turn into."

"Sears was durn careless," put in Farrar. "Never realized, I s'pose, how all the receivers goes down whenever any one commences to talk on our line. The women started a clack, and we thought we'd come up and warn you, since you don't seem to have delivered the goods."

"Plow your poppies in to once and plants turnips on their graves," advised Slocumb.

Bowes offered to lend his sulky plow, the only one in town. Every one was sorry for the little ignorant Polander, blenching under the dirt.

They could not know he was blenching with anger and not fear. He had been quite well aware that selling poppy juice to make opium was not exactly safe. His had been a shrewd scheme to amass a small fortune. Natupski stupid? He was not in the least stupid. He was so clever that after living beside these neighbors for twenty years he could fool them by feigning stupidity when such feigning might get him out of a scrape. He wished the men and women would go away so he could curse in peace over the unlucky outcome of the brilliant plan born in his mind as he saw the poppy page in the seed catalogue Mrs. Perkins had let fall that spring

afternoon. It seemed a gift from heaven, the idea, coming just when he wanted money for Novia's dowry. With the Woman's Club and Novia concerned it had seemed to him the poppy field would pass as a girl's garden.

Even now he wondered how that detective man had learned so much. Only Novia knew of the Chinaman's visit. She had been in the field when he came to look at it, and to explain just how he wanted the juice collected, with clever fingers, at the hour of dawn.

Susy Perkins gave the required information in a side sneer for Novia's benefit. "I guess that was pretty bad," she sputtered. "Bert Sears sitting on walls holding hands. Siwell beau, Miss Novia, laying plans to get your pa arrested."

Novia was off in a flash, when the dreadful truth was told. To the poppy field she fled, her heart as surely wounded as if the drip of blood stained Anastasia's corsets. It had meant nothing that she had thought it meant—his speaking softly, listening eagerly, pressing his lips to hers. Where the poison had been sucked in Novia tried to burn it out. She bruised her lips against the wall. She fell in the dirt between masses of poppies. She thought she would never rise. Life had been beautiful, now it was ugly. She wanted no more of it.

Yet one hint of her father's goad brought her to her knees.

"Blab mouth," hissed Kani. "Take shame for yourself, vile girl. All the neighbors seen you lovemaking, when me, me believed you worked. Up and take what's coming."

Novia's kind and loving father, so keenly disappointed

in his beautiful plan to give the speculation's proceeds to his daughter for a marriage portion, whirled her about. He sought the most attractive spot for an opening blow. Novia closed her eyes and longed for the sting that might bring forgetfulness of a shameful memory, when lying lips sought hers and found them, oh, so willing!

Trit-trot! came a pony. "Sposh!" said a voice in tone of thunder.

"You, mister," snorted Natupski, "wait till this girl is got licked and I do you the same."

Instantly Novia felt herself plucked from her father's grasp and deposited on the pony's back. Mr. Sears then removed his coat and bared a pair of muscular arms.

"Say, that program ain't quite correct. You got to take me first."

Mr. Natupski stared at six feet and muttered.

"No show, eh? And let me tell you, no reason. I'd stand with hands tied and let myself be beat up if you had a reason. But I fixed it so you got warned in time, and for your flyer in opium you're the worse for nothing but a scare. Mr. Natupski, give me your hand and call it half settled."

Natupski let fall the goad.

"Give me Novia and call it all settled."

Natupski grinned. After all, a poppy field would be Novia's marriage portion.

IX

OLD BILLS TO PAY

MRS NATUPSKI sat alone in the house. It is hard to believe, but she was quite alone. Everything from Novia down was in District Seven, making it possible for Miss Olive Greene to keep her job.

The committee faced the situation bravely. When the last Natupski finished the ninth grade District Seven would be no more. To give Miss Greene something to do a kindergarten class had been formed, in which Zinzic and 'Rinka's twins burst into comprehension every forenoon. Mrs. Natupski did not like being alone.

She felt afraid, as if something unpleasant was going to happen. It did. Stanislarni arrived. Mrs. Natupski looked with awe at her handsome eldest son.

He came in, kissed his mother, and sat down patiently by her side.

"I met father—tatulo—and 'Rinka," he said, speaking in the slow and careful manner which exasperated his mother so that she wished he was reduced to the size for beating. "He said he was going to the courthouse."

Mrs. Natupski shook her head in pretended doubt. She remembered a time when she had waited for a ship and taught a boy an English greeting. It was never this boy. That other's mechanical "Hell-o, pa-pa," after many years, was more real than anything said today by the well-dressed giant sitting beside her. He and

Kani seemed to have much to talk about, but she understood nothing of their plans. She was only good to tend babies, and the babies had stopped. Once she had hoped to keep Stepan, but now they were saying he must be sent to High School. That was the end. When they went to High School they were lost.

After a while Stanislarni got tired of sitting still. He went out of doors and inspected the swelling buds on the pear trees. Then he disappeared round the house and came in through the shed.

"Father—tatulo—has moved the fence," he observed.

Mrs. Natupski looked up and tried to read her son with eyes that were very like the seeds to come later on the hedge of tiger lilies that changed owners when the fence went back. He looked too shrewd to win her confidence.

"If he wants to sell he better let it all go, and not dispose of it in this piecemeal fashion," Stanislarni went on, musing aloud. "Father'd buy, and the money in the lump would be worth something to the Slocumbs."

Mrs. Natupski clinched her fists under her apron of cracked black oilcloth. This was how he spoke of the Slocumbs, whose chickens and cream had preserved his father the time Tadcuse was the baby. Since Stanislarni was now too large to beat she wished she had beaten him oftener when he was small. She would give Yan and Zinzic beatings when they returned from school. Perhaps twenty years from now they would bring her sorrow.

Once more Stanislarni went out. Wandering aimlessly, he came under a Slocumb window and saw an awful sight—Nancy Slocumb in tears. When Nancy felt emotion she screwed her features into resemblance of

some terrifying gargoyle. She had been weeping for an hour, and it would take days for her face to smooth out.

Hurrying home, he found his mother had gone into the front room, where she could see the newly located fence. Her shoulders were shaking, and great crystal drops rolled down her bulbous nose and fell off her leathery chin. Stanislarni hadn't been so puzzled since his first encounter with oyster forks, butter-spreaders, and finger-bowls.

At the barn door he waited his father's coming.

"Mamma is crying," he began. "What's she sad about? Has anything happened to any of us?"

Kani's face expressed exhilaration and guilt.

It was still possible to obtain information from Kani Natupski by walking-match methods, and Stanislarni always wore easy shoes when he went home. Today they paced a mile to the woods and followed the new fence back. They trotted in other directions to look at winter rye and plowed fields. Finally Kani vaulted the new fence and crashed through undergrowth, until he emerged on a high cliff which overlooked all the Natupski, Slocumb, and Pinkney domains, as well as much of the Bowes and Perkins property. Stanislarni followed and was glad to sit and rest on the mossy carpet topping the huge ledge.

"Sunrise Rock" it had been for over a century, and the initials of wandering students from Holly Academy were healing over on all nearby trees. The students made the place an object of their Mayflower and Chestnut walks, and quarreled as to the legend connected therewith. Of course it was the scene of an Indian maiden's

death, and she had thrown herself over the precipice. But was she escaping from a cruel Englishman, or did she die of sorrow because deserted by a lover of her own people? At any rate, she had thrown herself over the precipice. Stanislarni went to the edge and looked down. It would be a terrible fall, but now the valley below was filled with trees, the tops of which were but a little way below the rock.

"Yes," said Kani, as if a question had been asked, "good lumber it is. Around here better couldn't be found with a candle. And when it gets cut down you shall make a fine thing hauling it, Stanislarni."

Stanislarni was startled. "Is Mr. Slocumb going to sell the timber?" he asked.

Kani suddenly jumped to his feet and spoke as if defending himself, though no accusation had been made. "One hundred acre he had," he cried, "long 'fore me and mamma comes here from Poland. And always a mortgage. By and by into a bank the mortgage gets. Ei, Stanislarni, if you must mortgage, never to a bank. M's Buckland have a heart to a bank, ole she-devil she is! So me take mortgage. To oblige. Jus' to oblige. Interest due, take land, move fence. M's Slocumb cry, mamma cry. Bimeby me take woodland, right here, give door-yard. Move fence back. M's Slocumb ask to supper. Mamma sing Oi ta dada. You like that, Stanislarni?"

Stanislarni leaned against a big tree that was to other pines what he was to his father. For a while he did not speak, then he asked, "Why didn't you take the woodland in the first place?"

Kani kicked a couple of stones over the cliff and seemed to enjoy hearing them crash through the trees.

"Slocumb fool," remarked Kani. "Not farm good. Always buy things for wife. Water squirt in yard. Dam' fool."

Stanislarni did not repeat his question. He thought he knew the answer. Mr. Slocumb had probably refused to sell the Sunrise Rock woodland. He had often refused to sell it in past years.

How exactly like Kani Natupski was this sudden moving of the dooryard fence; this reckoning on the tears of two women to give him what he meant to have. Yet who could say it was not absolutely just that Abner Slocumb should pay what he owed?

Stanislarni rushed by Slocumb's without so much as a nod to Mr. Slocumb, whereat Abner was really hurt. He went into the barn and told the horse.

In the house Nancy was elaborately busy ignoring eyes like boiled gooseberries.

"That the oldest Natupski boy went by?" she presently asked.

"Yep."

"Stop to pass the time of day?"

"Well, no. But I cal'ate he was in a hurry."

"Nothing the sort. His father's had him up on Sunrise Rock, and back and forth they walked like nothing on earth so much's them two in the New Testament that went into a High Place and One was tempted."

"Sh! That's sacrilegious, Nance."

"Well, I don't feel perticular meek, and I don't believe a word of that promise about their inheriting the earth. G'long out and do the chores. I'll have supper in half an hour."

Abner went, knowing she needed fifteen minutes for

another cry. Poor Nance, she was taking it hard. It was the first time he had ever stood out against her, in all their married life. She wouldn't have shed a tear if he'd let the woodlot go; it was the shame of that fence under the sitting room window that was breaking her heart.

"Darn it all," he said, harking back a couple of decades, "why couldn't the town have bought of Mrs. Judson Buckland for a pest house?"

Abner Slocumb just wouldn't acknowledge that his predicament was due to the easy and procrastinating habits of the Slocumbs.

Others wouldn't acknowledge it, either.

Halfway to the depot Solomon Russell, driving a new little chunk, offered Stanislarni a lift.

"Git in," said Solomon, to Stanislarni, and then "Git down" he said to the brown dog that was occupying half his seat. For a good many years Solomon had won the derision of West Holly by letting himself be bossed round by a series of dogs, of which this was the third. Like Mrs. Natupski, Solomon stood somewhat in awe of Stanislarni, so "Git down where you belong, sir, on the bottom the buggy," he repeated to the animal, adding "I'm going to bring this one up right. The others kind o' got round me, but you see I hadn't any experience with the first feller, and I cosseted the second 'cause I was feeling so bad the other had to die. But this one'll toe the mark. I'm learning him manners. He was just setting up here now as a reward for being good and riding where he belonged yesterday."

Stanislarni laughed, and sat down on several million dog hairs. "You think dogs have fine memories, Mr. Russell," he observed.

Solomon also laughed. "You won't believe it, for young men nowadays don't believe nothing, but the average dog's got twicet the memory of the average man."

"That doesn't apply to West Holly men," said Stanislarni. "I'm told that meetings of the committee in charge of that great celebration we're going to have when the town's 250 years old can't get down to business because the West Holly contingent reminisces so much."

"I wonder," said Solomon Russell, with the excessively simple air he admired to put on when he was about to say something malicious, "if they ever tell that old story about how your pa was like to been rid out on a rail?"

"I wonder!" exclaimed Stanislarni. "Let me see, that must have been when I was about——"

"You was said to be four year old," put in Russell, with the promptness of a man who is always pat with the dates and details of other folks' affairs. "Arterward I believe a few years was added so's you could fool the Miffin Mills. But I guess you weren't more'n five, anyhow. It was right arter you ma got here from Poland, fetching you and your brother—the one that was such a pickle till you took him in hand and steadied him down. Folks round West Holly was kind o' put out the way your father deceived 'em. They was about ready to make him git, bag and baggage, and I don't think their methods would o' been none too gentle, either. They was all r'iled up. Funny to think how things come out, ain't it? I've wondered a good deal, lately, if Abner Slocumb'd been quite so strenuous on the Natupski side if he could have seen into the future."

"I wonder?" said Stanislarni again. "He put up a good fight for my father, didn't he?"

"Sure he did. Right in Deestrick Seven School, with Bowes in the chair and me on the dunces' block. Going to git off here? Well, goo' night."

Solomon drove away, helping the dog to scramble on the seat, and happy in having given the Natupski boy something to think about.

Stanislarni abruptly plunged into a field grown up to young birch, and breasted the bushes until he was hidden from the road. Then he took off his hat, and let the wind cool his forehead, which was in a glow from Solomon Russell's story. Stanislarni had never heard it before, though he had mendaciously encouraged Solomon by pretending to know it well.

After the still spring evening had done its soothing best Stanislarni resumed the road. The next day he came out to West Holly again. Folks who saw him go by were of the opinion that he was snooping round to help his father in something nefarious which was probably worthy of admiration because bound to be a financial success. The set of his shoulders was said to indicate a masterful disposition, and there was a good deal Daniel Websterlike in his massive head. "Going to see your folks again?" they asked. "You don't usually visit 'em two days running!"

"This time," smiled Stanislarni, "I'm going to call on a lady."

It was only Miss Juletta Pinkney, and that every one knew. Returning to West Holly at twenty-one Stanislarni had immediately started to cultivate affection for

Miss Pinkney, a brisk ninety. She had not, one observes, kept her promise to her mother's picture.

Stanislarni went to the south door, raised the shining knocker, and was admitted by the glum-faced house-keeper who sometimes changed her personality, because West Holly was such a forsaken place to work out in, but whose face was always glum.

Stanislarni took four steps up the long flight and entered the north room. Julia Farrar was standing by the window. She used to totter on her feet for hours, talking to Juletta, and preserving the fiction that she was going the next minute.

"My eye and Betty Martin," she said to Stanislarni, "doesn't my sister hold her age?"

"I've just found an example," said Juletta, "in mother's family. We never used to speak of them, but they were Hallowells, and their history has been put in a volume. My double great grandmother has this on her gravestone:

*'Sprightly I walked life's journey through
Till I arrived at ninety-two,
And then deferred my trip to heaven
Till all my years was one and seven.'*

Julia Farrar nodded at Stanislarni. "See the stent she's setting herself," said Julia, and disarranged her teeth giggling, so that she had to totter across the hall into her own domain.

Miss Pinkney and Stanislarni had discovered they were affinities in the inconsequential way such affairs are usually arranged. Stanislarni had looked nextdoor one day

and observed that there was the quaint old lady who used to speak so sharply to the Natupski children if they ventured to pick anything over the fence. At the same moment Miss Pinkney noticed what a great hulking youth that oldest Natupski was. He removed his hat—he was wearing one of those cheap Panamas that you fold into your pocket if it rains. She never forgot his hat. Then he bowed and showed his white teeth in a wide smile.

“Come up and see me, young sir,” called Juletta, in her clear old voice, and “By all means,” returned Stanislarni in his youthful roar. There was a good deal of amazement when he continued to go in and out of the South door, but after a while it died down. As we know, West Holly could get used to anything.

Stanislarni seemed to find all the feminine society he wished in that North room. He often mused, loverlike, over Miss Pinkney’s fleece of white hair, and her soft hand, on which sparkled a valuable diamond. Julia Farrar had given her the diamond on her eightieth birthday. Julia Farrar often gave her things like that, saying she didn’t see any need of swapping wash rags for presents just because they were old. Youth had youth, that was about enough. Let old age have the gim-cracks.

The romantic affection Juletta had conserved when she was very young and wooed by Hiram Farrar and others she freely gave to Stanislarni. Perhaps it was hardly worth while to keep it any longer. She listened for hours to his plans, and told him plainly when she thought his neckties were abominable, calling them cravats.

Stanislarni sat down in a wing chair and beamed at Miss Pinkney in another. The windows were full of

hyacinths and Juletta wore a hyacinth-colored gown and a white crêpe shawl. A slow fire smoldered behind the brass fender. Sometimes the blue smoke came down the chimney instead of going up; the smell of resinous wood was then added to the perfume of flowers.

"You're not talking," said Juletta.

"I don't want to talk," said Stanislarni.

"Well, don't then, till you feel you want to," replied Juletta, and added something to future years by taking a nap. When she opened her eyes she was met by Stanislarni's smile. She always thrilled at that smile. It told her that if anything happened to Hiram Farrar and Julia—and they were none so robust—she would not be left uncared for.

"I want you to tell me," said Stanislarni, "about the three farms—yours, my father's, and Mr. Slocumb's. Who owned the land originally?"

"The Slocumbs came a little the first," Juletta admitted, sadly. "The first Slocumb got it from the Injuns. Then our ancestor, Primus Pinkney, took a grant from the Mifflin settlers, who claimed everything in the Outward Commons, and he and the Slocumbs fixed up a boundary."

"Land wasn't worth so much in those days," put in Julia Farrar. "'Twas about all they had. And trees—they burned 'em to get shut of 'em."

"And some time my father's farm was carved out?"

"Yes. A Buckland bought fifty acres from each, and so it went down to Judson and Mrs. Judson. I've heard there was considerable feeling against the first Buckland. He was from Canada and folks called him a foreigner."

"And then came my father from Poland—a real

foreigner! I learned yesterday how excited West Holly got over his arrival."

"Mr. Abner Slocumb," Juletta went on, "was always a friend to your folks."

"I remember a good many cakes and little kindnesses," said Stanislarni.

"There was probably other matters, too," said Juletta, "though I can't recall them. I had troubles of my own about that time. But when it comes to settling accounts between the Natupskis and the Slocumbs you mustn't let your father forget the debts he owes. On this side, now, it's different. The Natupskis owe the Pinkneys nothing——"

"Two pink luster saucers," came in sepulchral tones from the next room.

"What?" roared Stanislarni, startled.

"I said, two pink luster saucers."

Juletta smiled and Julia Farrar rambled to the door so she might be seen snickering. For some eighteen years the tragedy of the saucers had served the ladies as a joke. They used to wrap the cups in bulky parcels and present them to each other Christmases. Juletta had found the diamond ring inside one cup, the cup being in a sawdust filled oyster keg.

Stanislarni put the story of the auction into that corner of his mind where he kept the charming whimsicalities of Miss Juletta, and went back to Holly, after a brief call on his mother, whose cheeks were still salty. He was hurrying to the trolley, when a woman tumped on a parlor window and beckoned him to go round to the door. The woman was Mrs. Judson Buckland, now so fleshy that a calico pony would have been hard put to it to

drag her about. So she stayed at home and made folks come to her. She was still the free-and-easy sort.

"Here, young feller," said she, "I understand your father's going to put the screws on Abner Slocumb and squeeze him till he hollers for help. What I'm going to tell would make a sight of difference if you'd any sense of gratitude, but I s'pose you ain't. And at that it may be some use in showing what a fool Slocumb always was. The first payment your father made after moving in was three dollars too much. Slocumb found it out and over he goes and gives your pa three dollars outen his own pocket, pretending I'd sent it by him. Your pa told me about it next time I called, before I could open my head to say a word. Now it's nothing against your folks to say three dollars about then probably looked as big as three thousand would about now. Don't set there staring at the door. I've had my say and it's off my chest. S'long."

Stanislarni had listened to the three revelations with the unmoved front acquired when undergoing mental hazing in early college days. They had really impressed him deeply; and he could not believe they would not impress his father. The next day he invited his father to come up on Sunrise Rock and have a talk. Mrs. Natupski watched them, through tears. She climbed into the garret and peeped from a window festooned with dead wasps and the carcasses of flies in spider webs.

They talked a long time. They pointed. Kani once lashed several trees. Finally they shook hands, like a couple of Americans. She stumbled downstairs, unable to see for weeping.

The men were also watched from next door. Nancy

Slocumb had climbed to her garret to spy, only, of course, she looked forth between festoons of red peppers and green "yarbs."

Up on Sunrise Rock they were saying something like this:

"What d'ye think, father, of a man who don't pay his just bills?"

Kani Natupski, seeing a connection with the Slocumb mortgage, launched forth into a long description of what he thought of such a man. He could not say all he thought on the subject in English. He took refuge in the speech of his native land. But he ended in good West Holly, "Slocumb not pay me slap up me send um side-winder knock um slantindicular."

"What d'ye think, father, of men who don't pay debts of the kind money can't settle?"

Then Kani Natupski got up and banged the trees. His son was a fool. What if Mrs. Slocumb was always putting pieces of pie over the fence? The Natupskis didn't want her pie. He never ate pie, even when 'Statia tried to make him. A money debt was the only debt.

Stanislarni made him pause and listen to a story of the time when all West Holly had been on the point of driving the Natupskis from town and Abner Slocumb had stopped them. It did not impress Kani Natupski. He lacked imagination to put himself back in those days, just as he had lacked imagination to put himself back in Poland by Marinki, when he married Olka.

Then Stanislarni told what his voice trembled to speak of—that pitiful little deception of the three dollars. But Kani Natupski had known that long ago. And he sneered when reminded of Mrs. Slocumb's kindnesses.

All this vexed Kani. He knew what it meant. Stanislarni wanted him to be good to the old fellow. Probably he wanted to take the mortgage into his own hands, and be an easy creditor, like the one Slocumb had a long time ago.

"Stroke the cat and go off with nothing, while me pay M's Buckland slam bang up," grumbled the father.

"No," said Stanislarni, "I don't intend to try to buy the mortgage, and I don't want you to make me a present of it."

"Sure not!" Kani was in a terrible hurry to avoid being considered capable of such a foolish action.

"I want you, father," and Stanislarni spoke with as much slow impressiveness as he used when trying English on his mother, "I want you to go, of your own accord—because it's your debt, you know—to Mr. Slocumb and tell him he's to help you move the fence back to where it used to be, before the post holes get sodded over."

"A' right," said Kani. "He give me equal swap on woodland here. Me got t' have woodland."

"No, father, there is to be no bargain whatsoever. Move the fence back, stop mamma and Mrs. Slocumb crying, and let things go on as they will. I'm going to propose a new crop to Mr. Slocumb—strawberries, and take them every day to Miffin in the auto. Miss Pinkney says all round here was what the Indians called Minnichogue—berry land. I think you'll get your interest yet."

"Dam'!" said Kani. "Interests to hell! Me don't want interest. Don't want dooryard. Want woodland—jus' woodland."

"But what for? You've got all the wood we can burn in a couple of lifetimes."

Kani thrust his head out and down in a way he had, and looked as if doubtful whether to butt the person vexing him or to dash his brains forth in a fury of revenge. Finally he spoke.

"Me and Anton got plan. Keep awful still, so folks sell cheap. Me got—how you call it?—option on woods way to top mountain. Bowes sell—he got lots more—Solomon Russell sell. Everybody sell, only Slocumb. Slocumb must sell, so wood can be brought down this way, over my land. Other ways too steep, too far."

"But—father—you wouldn't chop off the mountain?" Stanislarni was not born in this country, but he felt all the sentiment of West Holly, that chopping off the mountain was a revolution.

"Ei? Make us rich. Big tree, growing long 'fore we come from Poland. Growing for us."

Stanislarni put a protecting hand on the towering pine by his side and wondered. Had these trees grown for his father and Anton just as other trees had grown for the first Slocumbs or Pinkneys? They burned those not needed for cabins and barns. His father would make money with those falling to his share. Was there a difference?

Yes, Stanislarni felt there was a difference, and he must study it out. His father had found a country ready made and had taken advantage of its offerings. And first, at any rate, he must be forced to pay the debt to Abner Slocumb.

"I think you're going to do what I suggest, father," he said, "because—because——"

"Because what for?"

"Because——" Stanislarni looked Pinkney way and thought what Miss Juletta had told him, "because, father, I learned yesterday of another debt you owe—a real money debt. You have been owing it many years. But I intend to pay it, father, for you!"

It was then Kani got up, self-accused of one knows not what bewildering tangle with American finances in his early West Holly days, and the watching women saw hands shaken.

The fence was moved, Nancy Slocumb wiped her eyes and entertained the juvenile Slocumbs at tea, while Abner planned strawberries for another year—for he had always been best on planning. Stanislarni alone fell down.

He went to Boston for the sole purpose of finding two pink luster saucers, entered all the antique stores on Boylston Street, and took part in the following conversation:

"What would you want for two pink luster saucers to match this cup?"

(He had filched one of the precious cups, with the connivance of Hiram Farrar.)

"About ten dollars each——"

"Here's the money——"

"If I had any such. But I haven't."

So the cup was sneaked back to live out a saucerless old age with its fellow. However Stanislarni trusted he might yet be able to settle the debt in some other way.

X

LORDS OF THE LAND

"NIE," said Kani Natupski. "Me not go. Can't go. Old sow, she threaten."

Stanislarni was urging him to take an interest in the 250th anniversary of Holly's founding.

"Nie," persisted Kani. "Old sow, she threaten. Me to home. You and Stepan ride in automobile machine."

There was special bitterness in this last direction. Stepan and Stanislarni had written a poem which saw light in the Hamson *Chronotype*, stirred West Holly to its foundations, and drove Kani Natupski to a point where he would have up stakes and returned to his native land but for the great war and hope of cutting off the mountain.

Stepan had presented it as a "theme" to Miss Olive Greene, while conscientiously declaring, "I made the words, but my brother told me the thoughts."

The last were the outcome of a lecture by one of those of "alien birth" whose patronizing Stanislarni deplored.

"Will all the immigrants before me stand up," said the lady, and when some half-dozen arose out of an audience of two hundred, "Oh," said she, scornfully, "I see I am addressing the Lords of the Land," and lambasted them unmercifully.

Stanislarni talked his feelings out in the presence of Stepan, with this result :

*An old New England theme, the Pilgrim Fathers came
To worship as they would, make others do the same.
They cleared the land of trees, began Thanksgiving Day;
They cleared the rattlers off, in safety made their hay;
They cleared the Redskins out, nor left a single stand;
The Hessians then cleared off, and they Lords of the
Land.*

*They'd conquered ev'ry foe, then to improve hard by
They slipped each man a vote, invented pumpkin pie,
Made poverty vamoose, taught ignorance to flee,
And set a schoolhouse red where'er a church might be.
The nice girls "service took," the men worked hand in
hand,
Yet each one for himself, and each Lord of the Land.*

*And then the Irish rushed from England's bulldog jaws,
As cops to carry out, as statesmen make, our laws;
Polanders came to learn, yet still evade the schools;
Italians longed to die unvexed by hygiene's rules.
And still they herd in slums, and will not understand
Ten in a room by night don't make Lords of the Land.*

*You were an alien folk who now are native sons,
Yet clung you to the old as do these other ones?
Nay, nay; 'tis writ that you oft cooked the Indian corn
In Indian ways before the first white child was born;
And no man whined for help who in cowhides could
stand
And work till he became a real Lord of the Land.*

*You would the stranger hordes, who make you question
"Why?"*

*Would cut the black bread out and learn New England
pie,*

*Your menus and your screens, your schools and bathtubs,
yea,*

And to these stranger hordes just this you have to say—

"New Pilgrim Fathers be, go cultivate their sand,

*Then hence three hundred years you'll strut, Lords of the
Land."*

Miss Olive Greene didn't know exactly what to make of this, so she marked it with a double a, and said, "Go cultivate their sand," wasn't a respectful manner of speech about a Pilgrim Father. Then she showed it to Miss Fanny Atwood of the *Chronotype* aforesaid.

Kani Natupski had clippings of the verses in all his pockets. He would take them out and try to read them and then go and beat a fence post. Telling him he must stay three hundred years in this America before he would be a Lord of the Land! He, with an option on the timber privilege of Holly Mountain.

This option was on the verge of being closed. The logs would be snaked down to a pentway, as Abner Slocumb had proved obdurate. It would result in cash in the pockets of at least five men, and utter destruction to Holly's chief beauty and principal source of water supply.

"I say," said Abner Slocumb to Stanislarni, one June evening, "would you like to take a walk with me beginning at Sunrise Rock and ending at Rattlesnake Peak?"

"No," said Stanislarni, who shrank from any dis-

cussion of his father these days. It was not seemly to be always quarreling with one's father.

"Didn't suppose you would," said Abner; "come along."

They paused but a moment at Sunrise Rock, then plunged into the forest, and over the carpet of brown leaves, bordered with brakes and beautified by a pattern of partridge vines, made their way upward. Perhaps it was forest primeval, at any rate these were trees to whose growth more than one century had contributed. Pines, hemlocks, maples, with here and there a splendid "paper birch" of ghostly white stem; to walk among them was like walking in a Hans Andersen story.

"We better enjoy it," said Abner, chewing sassafras leaves. "It's the last time we'll want to come up here. I never had any heart, myself, for a place that's been cut off. Makes me think of what I imagine a battlefield might be. Nature don't do her work so vi'lent and sudden. Course we can imitate nature and take out a tree here and there year after year, but that ain't the road to fortune."

"I wish you'd shut up," said Stanislarni.

"I know you do," said Abner. "Did you ever see anything prettier than the sunshine creeping down betwixt those walnuts? And look at the white rabbits whooping it up in that clearing 'mongst the everlasting blossoms! Next year I suppose this won't be nothing but stumps and raggedy sumachs and general destruction."

"I can't bear to think of it," said Stanislarni.

"Of course you can't," returned Abner Slocumb. "Yet after all why shouldn't it be chopped off and some

newcomers get the benefit? I d' know as my folks was particular considerate of the rights and wishes of those that come afore 'em, back in the seventeenth century. I presume the Injuns thought considerable of their woods, where they'd chased the—well, whatever they chased—and made trail marks on the trees and camped and been masters of all they surveyed. Yet they said 'What cheer?' to Roger Williams down in Providence Plantations after the Puritans had driv him out, and I understand they sold to my ancestor for a jug o' fire-water and a ole gun."

"They didn't see the future," said Stanislarni.

"No. And I wonder sometimes if we Americans saw it. If we had we wouldn't have cut and slashed and forgotten those that was to come after us, and dried up the water courses and been generally me for myself and the devil take the hindmost. Well, here we be on Rattlesnake Peak. I ain't got no posterity, so I ain't no call to regret this one place can't be left for 'em. Climb up the ladder into that topmost tree, Stanislarni. They say you can see the dome of the state house to Hartford from it."

"I don't care a hoorah in hell for the state house at Hartford," said Stanislarni.

"Sure not. Well, then let's go home-along. And I want to talk with you about your future, Stanislarni, which is a darn sight more importance than any old pine tree. I s'pose you're perfectly satisfied to boss a motor truck all your life?"

"No," said Stanislarni, "I'm not. You know well enough I'm not, Mr. Slocumb. I just drifted into that, because Holly, and especially West Holly, needed some

way to reach a market, and no one else had thought of risking an auto express. I'm making money and giving Holly something that was badly needed, but I'm not contented. Wajeiceh can run the business now; it seems to me I ought to be doing something in which I would use all the ability that is developed by education."

"Does it?" said Abner. "Well, it's too bad things have turned out the way they has. And now good night. I s'pose I'll see you tomorrow in the parade."

The 250 years were up. Nature smiled, as it had not smiled when the town was instituted. This took place, said history, in a terrible storm. The first settlers of Holly met in the open, to praise the Lord and establish town government; they were forced to adjourn to a barn, and when the roof blew off they went elsewhere.

Now the town had an academy, a railroad, several churches of warring denominations, three full graveyards, a soldiers' monument at Holly Centre, of atrocious design; and the Natupskis.

Holly Centre spent itself on a parade. Winding under the arched elms of the street, it was wonderfully impressive. First came the prominent townsmen, with whom Kani Natupski would not walk; then an old-time Master Buckland disciplining an early District Seven; next Mrs. Sabrina Perkins churning in a chaise, as illustration of the way time used to be saved.

Next, the "Last Indian" on a float.

There he sat, before a wigwam hung round with pelts. He was very old, one could see that, and longing for the happy hunting ground. Holly history said this one red man had lingered until the middle of the eighteenth century and made his final stand on the mountain.

This was an unexpected part of the show and it made an amazing appeal. Peanuts stopped on the way to parted lips and giggling children went for a moment unscolded.

"Who is the man?" asked Mrs. Tweed, over from Eastfield for the occasion. "He has gotten up the float like an old painting, in subdued browns and dull reds, in keeping with the sentiment. See the brown leaves under foot—the withered pine above the wigwam—the faded blanket? He is an artist. What is his name? And how completely his face fulfils one's conception of the Indian type."

"That's Stanislarni Natupski, ma'am," said Abner Slocumb, who was standing near. "And I tell you it's taken work and thought to get up that living pictur. That blanket—it's hung outside my barn fading 'all spring. Looks the spitting image of an Injun, don't he? I heard a fellow say in a lecture the American red man favored a lot of nationalities, and I believed it when I see Stan Natupski browned up."

Of course Kani Natupski did not approve of his son's performances. Found at the close of day ostentatiously hovering about the pig-pen, where nothing was happening, he grunted, "Why you no take prize? Six week you spend painting tent and making bow arrow, then you no take prize."

"Wasn't it 'noble of him?" burbled Yadna. "He gave it up to 'The First Settlers' float because there was fifteen on that and they rehearsed so much. It was a ten-dollar gold piece. I seen it with my own eyes."

Papa ran out his tongue at the wastrel and ordered them both away. They were disturbing the sow.

Holly Depot had its innings and then came West Holly's day. Kani Natupski could keep none of his brood at work, though all got up as early as he did in order that the weatherbeaten house might burst forth into bunting. Stanislarni and Stepan proudly surveyed the huge flag which covered the front from garret to foundation.

"Good enough," said Abner Slocumb, from the bay-window roof, where he perched while nailing the date of his ancestor's Indian grant.

Then he chuckled so he narrowly escaped sliding off the roof. "Wonder if the Perkinses will show a still?" he inquired of the universe. "Prohibitionist Sabrina's folks was in the rum and brandy making line way back. Sure, I'm ready for breakfast, Nance, if it's ready for me. West Holly is all diddled up and the doings can't begin none too soon to suit us."

The first to issue from the Natupski house was Kazia, who had kept close to Mrs. Tweed the two previous days. That lady had gone back to Eastfield, and Kazia walked in apprehension. It would seem impossible to escape meeting Nick Kovinski in West Holly, should he come. Kazia had wanted him to take it hard when she wrote she could not fulfil her promise to him, but he had taken it with bitter jauntiness.

"Yet he didn't marry Mamie Leary, yet," thought Kazia, and wondered why. She was rather afraid to meet him suddenly in the lush June country, where they had become lovers.

Thinking thus, Kazia stalked along to the three corners. Suddenly, from behind her, came pattering feet, and to her spoke a hurried voice.

"Kazia, Kazik, did you see any one on a red motor-cycle with a car 'longside?"

It was 'Rinka escaping papa's espionage; 'Rinka in a sport hat, a striped jacket, white skirt, and fancy shoes. How she had gotten them no one knows, as it now took all that Jefferson Browne paid for the support of the twins to support them.

"I did not," said Kazia, sternly. Since she had lived in Eastfield she had come to disapprove of 'Rinka in thorough manner. Straight and calm she stood, looking rather unsisterly. Mrs. Tweed considered her a model, with plain coiled hair under an untrimmed Panama hat, and large feet in ground gripper shoes. Mrs. Perkins told Susy that was the way a self-respecting young woman should turn herself out. Still Kazia had not 'Rinka's tricks of eyes and so would probably miss some of life's zest.

"If you do see anybody like that," gasped 'Rinka, "I'll be down by the church shed. We've missed each other somehow—papa made me help him change the sow's bedding, and I had to dress all over again. He wears a cap backside to and yellow giglamps."

"'Rinka," said her sister, sternly, "I should think you'd had enough of men to keep out of scrapes. You stay right here beside me."

"Not much I won't," returned 'Rinka, swinging her immaculate skirt skittishly. "You haven't been home, Kazia, much, and you don't know what a hell of a life papa leads me. He got it in for me always, and now he expects likely I'll stick around and be his nigger slave till I'm old as next-door Miss Pinkney for my keep. Well, I been looking for today. I'm going to go for a

ride over to Mifflin Grove. Then I'm coming back and I'll walk in on papa and say to him, 'G' by, papa. Here's where you get off.' Just like that. 'Here's where you get off.'"

Kazia was amazed to faint speech. "What do you mean—what are you going to Mifflin for?" she whispered.

"To be married, you big goose. He don't care if Jeff Browne did divorce me."

"Oh, 'Rinka," pleaded Kazia, "don't marry——"

"Pooh for you! You're an old maid, and like it, I s'pose. But I don't notice papa getting you to carry no swill when you're round home. I'm going to get married and that's straight goods."

"I mean—don't marry in this underhand way. Stanislarni and I would arrange it in proper fashion——"

"Naw," said 'Rinka, "nothing doing. Papa'll be mad enough to kill some one, and I want him to be, but I ain't mean enough to get the rest of you in bad. I'm just going to break his heart all by myself. Listen! I'm going to take the twins!"

Just then they turned the corner by the church and Kazia found herself caught in a snarl of her relations—Novia blushing beside Bert Sears, Wajeiceh proudly telling Tadcuse how that the final clearing of this bit of land as a green park on which to place the monument came from the action of three boys who first leveled it and threw off the large stones so they might play ball there.

"Those boys," observed Wajeiceh, with the air of a schoolmaster, "were named Wajeiceh Natupski, Frank

Bowes Seymour, and Shaum Kelly. The neighbors often referred to them as pickles, which was not polite."

"You ain't polite, either," said Tadcuse. "You said yourself first. Lookit, what's Kazik making motions for?"

The excited sister got Wajeiceh one side and told him the awful tale. Marinka was going to elope.

"Good work!" said Wajeiceh.

Kazia grasped him by the arm feverishly. "It must be stopped," she declared. "No one knows who the man is, or whether he'll support her and treat her well. She's reckless. She was reckless before."

"Maybe so," said Wajeiceh, "though I've got an idea the first affair was done with father's full blessing. Perhaps that's why the little devil thinks she can dispense with it this time. But you're wrong in one point. The fellow'll support her. Hello, Stan!"

Kazia was turning to wring her hands for Stanislarni's benefit, but Wajeiceh blurted out the news.

"'Rinka's flew the coop."

"Good work!" said Stanislarni.

This unanimity of masculine opinion brought Kazia to despair. She burst into tears. "Brutes!" she exclaimed, "laughing while your sister rides to ruin—on a motor-cycle——"

"No, no, not so bad as that," said Stanislarni, "only to a basement grocery store. She thinks she'd rather work there than in a pig-pen."

"I don't blame her," said 'Statia, calmly, as she joined the group, without seeming to need any explanation of the subject which was engaging them. Novia also came

near. "We've been down to see them off," she whispered, "Bert and me. 'Rinka let me kiss her."

"They've made a getaway," added Yadna. "Round the Hamson road. He'd brung a motor bonnet and duster for 'Rinka. You wouldn't know her from a hole in the ground."

Kazia's indignation had dried her eyes. "If you are all acquainted with the affair," she said, bitterly, "and all think it so fine, why let it be a secret business?"

"Sposh," said Bert Sears, "little sister-in-law-to-be, you don't seem to be wise."

"She ain't," grinned Wajeiceh, "she don't know 'Rinka's marrying Nick Kovinski!"

"You remember who Nick Kovinski is, don't you, Kazia?" asked 'Statia, but Kazia was saved from replying!

The West Holly monument had to be dedicated, whether or not affairs were quiet in the Natupski family.

So, "Shush, there, girls," warned Mrs. Perkins, finger up, "the exercises are about to begin." Yadna ran to join the children on the bank, whose voices soon rose more or less tunefully, but with all the freshness and bravery of untried youth, asserting

*My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing.*

They sang so loud of her that even Kani Natupski heard it, and was drawn away from his pig-pen. Conscious of dirty clothes, he slouched behind the graveyard wall, and watched every man take off his hat as

Blanchard Bowes finished his brief oration, and the monument was uncovered. Kani Natupski privately thought it a pretty poor affair. Only a huge boulder, with a simple plate of bronze bearing the names of two dozen West Holly men who had gone to fight the South in the '60's, and of the few others who had carried guns in the Revolution, the War of 1812, the French and Indian war, and that of '98. Small and unimportant as West Holly was, it had been represented in every contest. Abner Slocumb noticed this and spoke of it to Solomon Russell.

"Can't say West Holly ain't stuck its finger in every national pie," he observed. "We may not figure large in census returns, but we generally got some of everything that's going."

"Yes," said Russell, "I understand the sheriff's tanking up and there's liable to be murder tonight at Natupski's. One of the girls has eloped with young Kovinski. There's always been bad blood between them families."

"Shucks," said Abner. "Anything Mr. Natupski does now has to measure up to his oldest son's ruling. I guess Stanislarni Natupski will keep murder from being did if he has to kill some one in the process. He's strong, Stanislarni is, and dependable. Always know where to find him. His mother never did a better day's work than when she brung up here with him, all the way from Poland."

And where was Mrs. Natupski all this time? Would not she have enjoyed seeing her Kazia bravely walking arm in arm with Susan Perkins, her Novia an object of envy to most any West Holly damsel, her Wajeiceh escorting dignitaries about? She and Stepan could have

exchanged looks of understanding, too, as the flag was run up on the pole at one end of the new little park.

Mrs. Natupski was not there. Mrs. Natupski was otherwise engaged. She had gone to the Mercy Hospital to have a baby! Her having the baby was nothing, but her going to the hospital was something to talk about. The older children had insisted on it. 'Statia made inquiries and arrangements, and Stanislarni drove the car in which she went, accompanied by all her daughters of adult size. It promised to make Mrs. Natupski's place in society. No West Holly child had ever been born in a hospital.

After they had left her Mrs. Natupski's mind reverted to her other hospital experience. White tiling, men doctors, nurses in starched clothes, and nothing to do, nothing at all to do, for three weeks. They wouldn't let you get up for three weeks. And the baby was taken away to be trained. A nurse with polyglot linguistic accomplishments took Mrs. Natupski to the nursery, showed her the rows of cribs, and explained that the ones crying were only taking their half-hour's allowance of such exercise to develop their lungs. Every baby, she remarked, had to cry half an hour for that purpose. Mrs. Natupski thought it would take something extraordinary, like a sharp pin, to make one of her babies cry that much.

Then she wanted to know how she could be sure always of getting her own, and the kind nurse explained about the adhesive plaster which was slapped on the wrist as soon as an infant entered the world. Quite contented, Mrs. Natupski let them etherize her, for nothing was forbidden patients in this establishment—

she might even have had something called twilight sleep, only it would have seemed ridiculous for one who had easily been the mother of ten.

Sunset came to West Holly, as usual, about half an hour before it came anywhere else, on account of the mountain. Abner Slocumb and Stanislarni Natupski took down their flags. Stanislarni thought the old house came out shabbier than ever after its one day of brave apparel. He wondered how he could keep his self-made agreement not to interfere in his father's affairs. All these children—and more—growing up in filth and disorder. A return of absolute ingratitude to all Holly's opportunities in the cutting and slashing of the mountain. There was mother to consider, too. He believed she would return from the hospital longing for something better than her home. He had caught her passing an approving hand over enamelled paint in 'Statia's kitchen.

Stanislarni turned and saw his father looking, also. Kani spoke, then, with the bitterness of one who had long chewed on the subject.

"My country of thee," said Kani, "thee I sing. America. Hell with America. In America money, yes. In Poland, not so much. In Poland fathers, mothers, childrens, grandchildren, all one. Me see you now. There stand you. And you think—you think white paints, green blinds, fine chairs to rock over in, tin beds, plates with pictures on. You think better mountain all trees than copper money for me and Anton. You all thinks so. You all thinks different from your papa. Zinzic, c'm here."

The little boy sidled up, finger in mouth. He sup-

posed papa was going to lick him; he couldn't tell what for.

"Zinzic, you like house made new, all paint like 'Statia's, and iron crib and chair-rocker in parlor 'stead celery?"

"You bet you!" said the child.

"And you like Rattlesnake Peak all tree, like now, or no tree but stump?"

"Trees! Trees!" shouted Zinzic. "No trees there, teacher can't take us on bird walks."

Kani Natupski turned away with a gesture of despair. He had interrogated Zinzic as one apt to be least touched by American notions. Six years only in America and see what it had done to him! Kani felt himself alone in the world. And the worst of it was that he was to blame. He had chosen this for his home and for the home of his revolting children. He was not even quite sure, in his inmost heart, that he would like to be back in Poland, if there was no awful war. He was all the more strenuous for the old ways because he felt himself weakening as their sole representative.

Abner Slocumb slouched over, seemingly for a confab, but really to bring news, gathered by telephone. Nancy came about six paces behind him, which was the way she and Abner went anywhere together. The cat nipped along as far behind her as she was behind Abner.

"At 2:36 p.m. this afternoon in Mifflin," Abner began, as if reading it out of a newspaper, "Arthur Slocumb, J. of the P., united Mr. Nicholas Kovinski, Jr., to Mrs. Marinka Browne, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Kani Natupski of West Holly. Kindly omit flowers—no, I don't mean that!"

For a moment Kani's eyes glittered ominously. Twenty years ago he would have given Abner Slocumb a whip cut, because that was the way one treated the bringer of bad news. Ten years ago he would only have beaten innocent members of the family. Now he stood still and breathed hard. Yadna, who believed in having it all out while the mood was on, put an addenda to the notice. "And she says she's going to take the twins, papa. Her new man is got a grocery store and little boys is awful useful in a grocery."

"Never you mind that," said Abner Slocumb. "My second piece of news'll make you forget grandchildren." He resumed his mock reading. "At 2:36 p.m. this afternoon, in the Mercy Hospital, Mrs. Kani Natupski gave birth to twins, both boys, and weighing fourteen pounds in the lump, unsorted. Mother and children doing fine. Mother kept by vi'lent methods from shouldering babies and footing it to West Holly to show 'em off."

Every eye in that dooryard was fixed anxiously on Kani Natupski. He might cry, he might kiss everybody (Slocumb was looking out apprehensively for such a demonstration), might kick Zinzic, might roll on the ground and eat dirt.

He went into the house and put on his best clothes.

While he was gone, Abner Slocumb improved the occasion.

"Well, altogether, you're some Natupskis," he remarked. "Stanislarni stirred the artistic big bugs of Holly, 'Rinka's provided something to talk about, 'Statia's beans took the cake, she says"—indicating Nancy by a thumb—"and now your ma has boosted the

population about two hundred per cent. And Stepan wrote a pome. Only that ain't true.

*New Pilgrim Fathers be, go emulate their sand,
Then hence three hundred years you'll strut, Lords of the
Land.*

It ain't three hundred years by a long shot, but you come pretty nigh to lording it."

"Remember," smiled Stanislarni, giving Nancy Slocomb the only decent seat on the piazza, "there was provision made for getting there sooner. Perhaps we've learned New England pie from living next door to you."

"This house certainly needs a bathtub," said Kazia, sententiously, rousing herself from a vision of 'Rinka and Nick drinking beer in that gaudy Kovinski front parlor. "I'm glad you put that in your verses, Stepan, though they don't scan very well."

"Screens, too," observed 'Statia. "I tried 'em once, but the way papa propped the door back they only kept flies in."

"Oh," cried Yadna, "here's papa."

He had put on Wajeiceh's glossy new hat for the purpose of tossing it over the kitchen chimney.

"Frolic, my soul, with thy coat off," he shouted in his native tongue, and then lapsed into English. "Me mad at nobody. He happy. Goo' by, 'Rinka. Sometime me buy flour sack off you, show no ill feeling. You two ones—" turning to Stanislarni and 'Statia—"shut up thinking white paints and tipover chairs. Go buy 'em. Listen at me. Buy 'em."

If he expected his children would wait to be coaxed,

he was disappointed. 'Statia instantly began to write out a list at the suggestion of Mrs. Slocumb, Wajeiceh said "sleeping porch," and Kazia (of course) "bathroom," while even the little ones spoke for brass beds and fluffy rugs that helped you to get up early by being so nice to step into. From the advanced state of their plans it was evident that all the Natupski family had been considering the deficiencies of their home a long time.

Kani went away to his beloved pig-pen, but soon came back and sat down as if, for once, he preferred the company of human beings. The old sow had grievously disappointed him. The litter was small and "all runts." He had wasted the day watching her. Better to have heard the music and eaten a good dinner in the grove.

"Of wife me am more proud," he remarked, and repeated it several times as an astonishing proposition. Then he added, quite of his own accord, "Next celebration, tell you what, me'll go!"

A promise for redemption 250 years hence seemed to demand no comment, but it had one from Zinzic, whose brains sprouted slowly. "Nobody on this piazza'll be here then," he observed, "unless maybe me."

Abner Slocumb and Stanislarni did not join in the laugh. They had gone into the road to see what the cornice of the old house would need before painting, and Abner had drawn the young man into the moonlit lane from which one could see the white face of Sunrise Rock.

"One other piece of news," he said, "I kept for you. Your father'll know it soon enough, and however he feels about it he can't help its happening. The state is going to take over the whole of Holly Mountain for a

reservation. Everybody'll get paid a fair price, and not a tree'll be cut 'cept as it's best for the others. And Holly's to name the tree warden. How'd the job appeal to you, Stanislarni?"

Stanislarni took a grip of something—it turned out to be Abner's hand—and said it was exactly what would appeal to him. But was he fitted for the position?

"No, you ain't," said Abner, "nor nobody in town ain't, neither. But I understand there's some sort of a Woodman Spare That Tree college where you can go and learn. I've talked it over with Bowes and old George Washington Browne, and they're willing you should have the appointment if you'll study up. Salary, I'll remark, probably about half what the truck business brings you in, but perhaps you'll sacrifice yourself for glory and Holly."

"I will," said Stanislarni, and stammered out something about a debt he owed the town. . . .

"As to that," said Abner, "the town owes your pa one. Only for his showing the danger we was in of losing all the best o' the mountain through private enterprise I s'pose we'd never thought of petitioning the legislature to save it."

Stanislarni stood like a young god of the trees, looking to the hills where lay his life work. Abner did not feel called upon to tell him that he had bargained for the appointment by promising to throw the Sunrise Rock piece into the reservation. That was what he had done. Long as they might live in West Holly, the Natupskis would never get out of debt to the Slocumbs.

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